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Pan Ku

P'an Ku



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Where the Magic Begins

By Sara Schwartz

In response to Shel Silverstein's "Where the Sidewalk Ends"

There is a time where the magic begins
And after the reality ends,
And where the purple plastic playhouse bends,
And where the highest stuffed animal descends,
And where the fake figurines become friends
To come together to harmonize as one.

They come out to play when I am idle.
Toys of all boys and girls can't contain themselves.
They hate those dusty shelves.
Barbies, blocks, and plastic bugs;
This is where the magic begins.

Yes they stand still.
Some are fooled by their ability to stay stiff,
But the children, they know, and the children sometimes stay
To watch what happens when the magic begins.



Time to Pretend
Solar Plate Print
Steven Hope

Revelations From the Fish Eye Lens

By Cristina Batista

*B*lessed is the library,
keeper of damp and
swelling whispers that
linger lovingly
on the spines of
lonely,
dusty books.

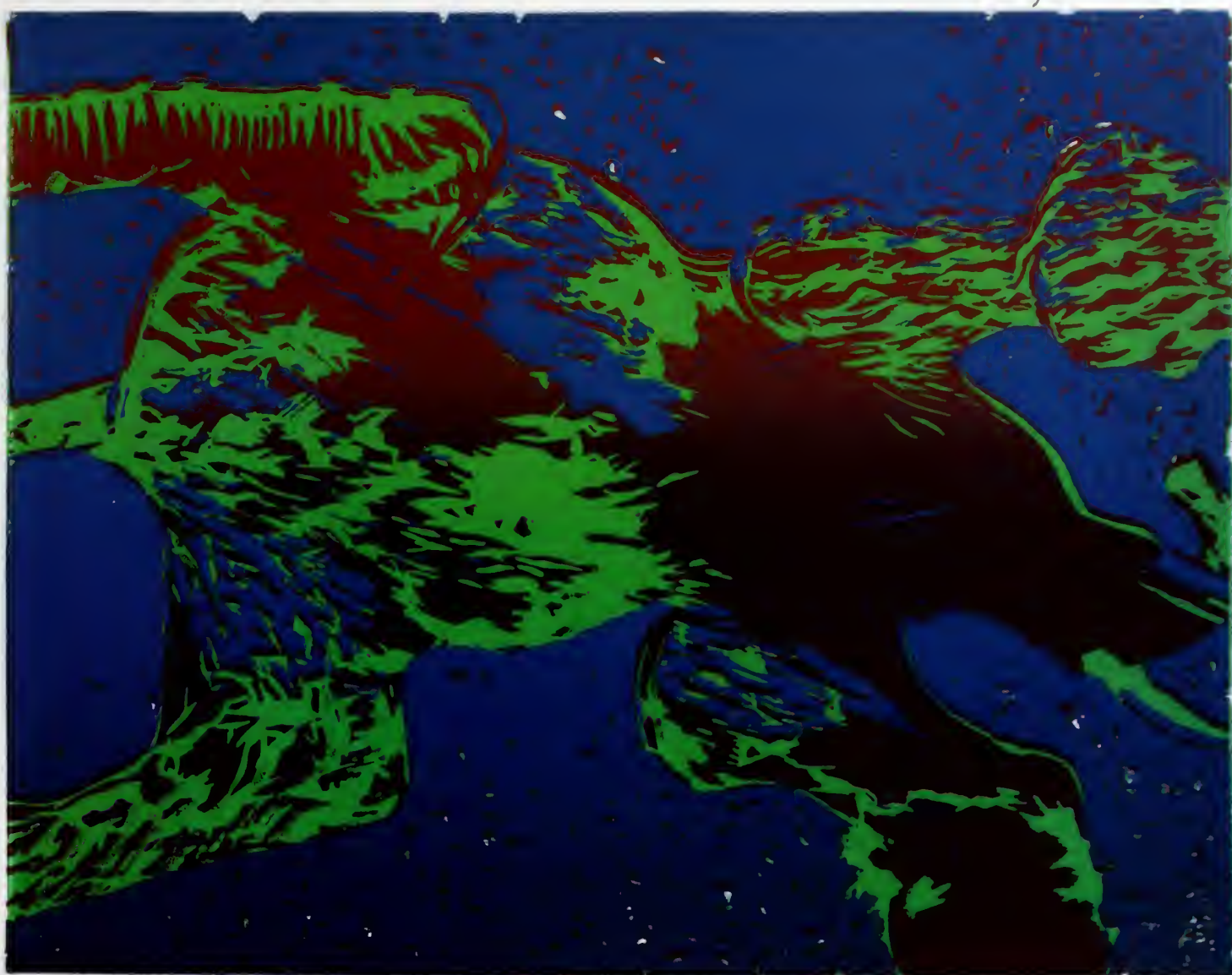
Blessed the boy whose
already underwater voice further
sinks
as he recounts
of how he
never showed,
and forgot to bring
street corner flowers and
day old,
heart shaped chocolates.

And blessed be the girl who
sits still
in the midst of
mathematical mental meltdowns,
may she be soaked in the
crashing waves
of last minute understanding.

Blessed the ones who
grace
the shelves with their
persistent current,
pushing and pulling and
pushing
and
pulling
until all is back in
its rightful place,
for they have earned a seat
on the sand castle shore.

Blessed is the conversation
and its circling thoughts
that float lazily
above them all,
brushing white foam upon
eager, salted lips,
for through it,
waiting words
come to form.

And the emotions swim
nakedly
past, delighting in their
dance of the deep.



The Under Belly of the Behemoth in Water
Reductive Print
Steven Hope





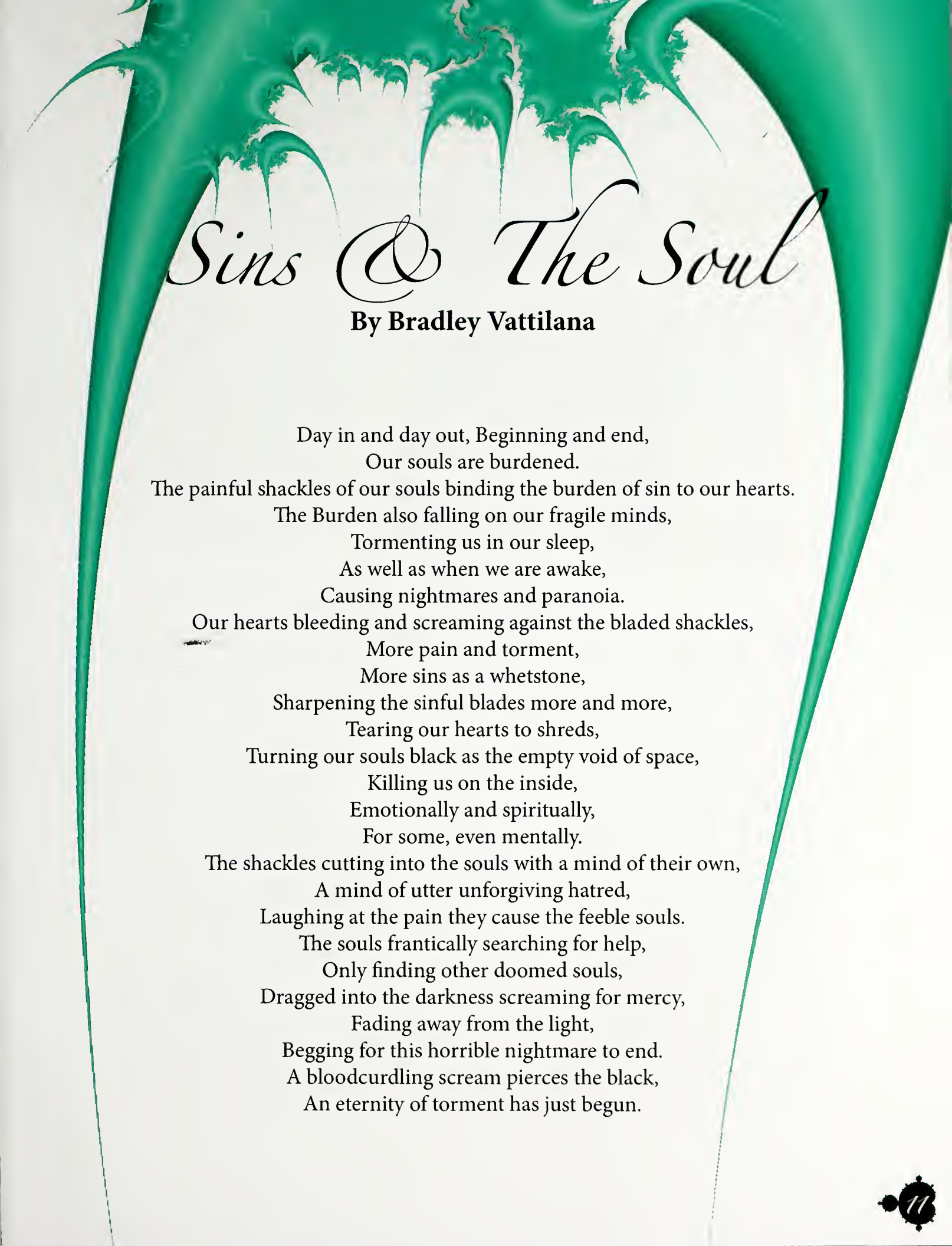
Paths

By R.S. Reed

I'm terrified of the choices I make
And even more so of the ones I delay



Gogh Apple
Digital Photography
Eliane Guzman



Sins & The Soul

By Bradley Vattilana

Day in and day out, Beginning and end,
Our souls are burdened.
The painful shackles of our souls binding the burden of sin to our hearts.
The Burden also falling on our fragile minds,
Tormenting us in our sleep,
As well as when we are awake,
Causing nightmares and paranoia.
Our hearts bleeding and screaming against the bladed shackles,
More pain and torment,
More sins as a whetstone,
Sharpening the sinful blades more and more,
Tearing our hearts to shreds,
Turning our souls black as the empty void of space,
Killing us on the inside,
Emotionally and spiritually,
For some, even mentally.
The shackles cutting into the souls with a mind of their own,
A mind of utter unforgiving hatred,
Laughing at the pain they cause the feeble souls.
The souls frantically searching for help,
Only finding other doomed souls,
Dragged into the darkness screaming for mercy,
Fading away from the light,
Begging for this horrible nightmare to end.
A bloodcurdling scream pierces the black,
An eternity of torment has just begun.



Featured Artist

Natalie Hernandez



La Bella
Mixed Media





Innocence
Digital Photography

*A*rt has always been an important part of my life; from drawing as a child and painting as a teenager, to digital photography and sculpture as an adult.

I realized my love for the camera during my black and white film photography course at Broward College. The enthusiastic professor introduced me to the inspiring creations of Ansel Adams, and needless to say, I was hooked. Art allows me to bring out the best aspects of my subjects where I use their uniqueness and beauty as inspiration to share their magnificence with the world. I constantly research and experiment with new and creative photography techniques to bring out those unique qualities that may otherwise go unseen. Photography, both digital and

film, is where my heart is.

However, I cannot deny the immense satisfaction of immersing oneself in the physical Medias. My favorites are charcoal, pen and ink, and ceramics.

I try to capture images that inspire emotion in the viewer without venturing outside of the boundaries of realism. The ability to fill a work with one's personality and emotions is at the core of fine art, and is what I try to do with my photography.

Throughout my life, I have had a thirst for creation and expression. I hope that one-day I can become an art teacher and share my love and appreciation for the arts by developing the individual skills of my students.

Featured Artist: Natalie Hernandez



Cold Envious Stare
Digital Photography



Faith Leads Me
Digital Photography



Dominance
Digital Photography



Barren
Digital Photography



Bitch

By Brittany Pryce

I guess I'll be your bitch
If it's better than your hoe,
But being a bitch doesn't mean you own me
Just thought you should know
If you like the way it sounds
Or just prefer not to speak my real name
It's fine; just make sure that your sister is called the same
And when you call your grandmother,
Tell that bitch I said hi
And the ones you call sluts
I never quite understood why, but
They're gonna call your daughter a bitch
So tell your little one not to cry
Daddy's been very disrespectful so she should understand why
And your mama, oh yeah, she's a bitch too
She's the worst bitch ever, for creating a slob like you
BITCH, BITCH, BITCH
Don't wear it out
Seems to be the only word leaving your dirty ass mouth
I'll be the bitch you want
Best bitch you can flaunt
Just don't get upset when your uncle slaps that bitch,
Oops, I mean your aunt
Because if I'm a bitch, then she's a bitch too
We're all females,
I mean bitches
Just thought you knew...



1989
Etching
Johana Lopez



Untitled
Digital Photography
Stephannie Benhamu



Untitled
Digital Photography
Stephannie Benhamu

Beyond the View of the Garden

By Fabiana Rodriguez

To them I am the crazy old lady living in the house on the corner; to me they are my subjects. I have become accustomed to the looks passerbies give my house and the snickering of the neighborhood kids trying to sneak into my back yard. I was once an active member of the club of life, but no longer. These days the fenced-in garden behind my house is the farthest I ever venture outside. The flowers are now beginning to bloom, exposing themselves again, gently waving in the wind.

I feel the effect of the numerous hours I have spent bent over my computer attempting to meet my latest deadline, beginning to strain my neck muscles. I am in need of some rest, tomorrow will be soon enough to continue writing. I exit the room and on my way to my bedroom on the other side of the house, I check that all the lights are off and the doors are locked.

A crashing sound stops me. I can't contain the crawling, uneasiness that forces me to fall back against the far wall of the hallway corridor. Who could be here? No one ever comes here. I close my eyes, trying to place where the noise is coming from. My attention is drawn to the linen closet across from where I am standing. I can hear movement coming from inside. "Who's there? Come out right now or I will call the police." I should run straight for the phone, but I can't seem to find the strength to make my legs move. The door slowly opens and the shadowy figure appears. Through the dim light of the corridor lamp the silhouette of a young man is illuminated. He appears to be no more than sixteen or seventeen years old with barely enough light stubble on his chin to call

a beard. Although his head is bowed and the hallway is poorly lit, I can make out his dark wavy locks and catch a glimpse of dark blue eyes. I remember seeing him before. I extend my hand reaching for a light switch by my right side to flip on another light in order to get a clearer view of him. I recognize him as the same boy I had seen two days ago, eyeing my house as he continuously walked my front path. I notice he is very skinny and wonder, when was the last time this boy had a bite to eat, let alone a bath? His clothes are also the same from the other day and they smell as if he has been wearing them for quite some time.

"Who are you? I've seen you hanging around outside my house. What do you want?" I ask.

"I'm sorry; I didn't mean to scare you. I thought the house was empty. The back door was unlocked, so I came in. I was cold and was just looking for a place to spend the night." He finally lifts his head and looks directly at me, more curiosity than malice in his stare. "Are you the crazy old woman everybody talks about?" he asks.

"How dare you? I want you out of my house this instant!" Suddenly, the pity I felt towards him a couple of minutes ago, becoming anger at his insult.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that. I'm cold and I just need a place to crash"

"Well 'crash' somewhere else. Now leave," I begin to walk to the back door leading him out the same way he had come in.

"Everybody's right. You are mean and crazy and scary, just look at your face, no wonder you lock yourself up in this old house," he says as he rushes out the door.

I unconsciously lift my hands to my face, feeling the rough scarring. I am shaken by the intruder's presence in my home and can no longer contemplate sleeping. I walk down the corridor attempting to calm my nerves.

This house with its creaking floorboards and drafty second bedroom has been my refuge for the last decade. It consists of few luxuries since I have no need for unnecessary comforts. I live alone and have become accustomed to never having visitors. I spend my days in the little parlor I have declared my private domain off the kitchen, overlooking the flower garden that I planted the second summer after I moved in. I have planted each flower with my own hands, pulled each weed and overgrown bush out until only sunshine and fragrance overwhelms the back path leading from the kitchen. I walk into a small room that gains me a clear view of my garden. This is my favorite place in the house.

This room has no mirrors. I don't want to walk by them and have the solace I achieve here invaded by the realism of what I have become. Here I am able to allow my imagination to flow through my hands and separate myself from reality. I travel worlds through the existence of those same fools that shun me. These mocking people that use my existence in order to further amuse and bring excitement to their otherwise pathetic, meaningless lives. Through these unknowing individuals I travel many lands, kill, love and live.

The success of my creations and the suspense of my true identity, have made me a renowned author. I have become a part of many households, inspired many new sensations and shaped many people's lives through my inspirational tales. They have become my heroes, heroines, villains and victims. I, in turn have left the old Amanda Jones behind reborn as A.J. Writer.

It has been a long time since the comments people make about me had any effect on me. I can hear their malicious remarks through the slight opening in my bedroom window. It doesn't upset me anymore not even when the local

children gather in front of my house on Halloween to worship the witch that lives inside. What do they know about my life? Of who I had been before all that was left of me were scars and memories. Why do the boy's comments have such a tremendous impact on me? Could it be because for the first time someone has said them to my face? All these people who think they have a right to speculate about me are insignificant. They are just players in my game, inspirations for my stories. But something about this boy's presence has triggered a self doubt in me that I have long suppressed.

All thoughts of what occurred last night still fill my head. I prepare my dinner with the supplies that are delivered to my back doorstep on a weekly basis sent by my editor. A light, hesitant knock resounds from my back door. I stiffly walk to it, unaware of

who could be there. As I open it I am faced with the young man I chased out of my house the night before. I open the door a crack more, careful to keep the right side of me concealed from view.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"I came to say I was sorry for yesterday. I was really mean to you," he replies.

"What happened, did the neighbors send you to scare me again so that they

could have a good laugh at my expense? Or maybe you wanted a better look at me in order to relay the tale?" I didn't mean to sound so bitter but I couldn't help it.

"I

"This house with its creaking floorboards and drafty second bedroom has been my refuge for the last decade. It consists of few luxuries since I have no need for unnecessary comforts. I live alone and have become accustomed to never having visitors."

didn't tell anyone I was here last night, besides I don't have anyone to tell."

"What's your name?" I ask.

"My name is Alex. Well I just wanted to say sorry." The breeze carried the smell of his stale bad breath deriving from what were probably un-brushed teeth and an empty stomach. After a couple of silent moments, he abruptly turned on his heel and began approaching the back fence, which he had probably climbed over in order to gain access to my house.

"Are you hungry?" I ask unaware of where the question came from. I should just let this boy go on his way. But, he looks so alone and pathetic and a part of me wants to help him.

"Maybe," he answers, stiffening his shoulders.

"I was getting ready to have dinner, so if you are hungry you can join me. Is there someone you want to call to let know you are here?" I open the door wide to allow him inside.

"No, Nobody." He stands there for a heartfelt minute and shyly walks inside.

As I sit down at the table across from Alex, I can feel him watching me. I feel no fear for this poor youngster, but watch him nonetheless from beneath my lashes. In an attempt to break the silence I say, "My name is Amanda, in case you were wondering. How old are you, Alex?" I ask.

"I'm seventeen and a half, almost eighteen," he says.

"Do you live in the neighborhood?" I ask.

"Umm, sort of," he answers.

"Do you have family around here?" I can tell by the way his shifts in his seat that the sudden flow of questions is making him uncomfortable.

"No."

"Where did you grow up?" I ask.

"Why are you asking so many questions?" he asks.

"I don't mean to make you

uncomfortable. I am just trying to get to know you better," I say. He does not respond and once again silence falls and we continue to eat. "I'm sorry," he says.

"Don't worry, Alex. I don't talk to people about myself either.

"Umm... Amanda. Do you mind my asking what happened to you? I mean the scars," he says this but is not able to look directly at me.

It has been a very long time since I have shared my story with anyone. "It was almost eleven years ago. I was working as a Junior Editor for a newspaper. I had been working really hard; you know trying to prove myself. I had loved writing for a long time and I was finally up for the journalist position. One night I fell asleep and forgot to turn out a candle that I had left on my desk. I love scented candles. They relax me while I work. I didn't realize what had happened until the fire was out of control. I was the only one in my apartment. By the time the fire department got me out I had severe burns and the doctors told me that there was nothing they could do. Back then, plastic surgery wasn't as popular as it is now," I said.

"But, why do you live here alone?" he asks.

"I wasn't always alone. After the accident I tried to continue to live a normal life, but I couldn't. I hated that people continued being happy even though I was miserable. I hated the doctors who told me they had done all they could do. But mostly I hated myself and couldn't look past the deformations that overtook the right side of my body and realize that I was the same person inside. That is when I moved into this house," I said.

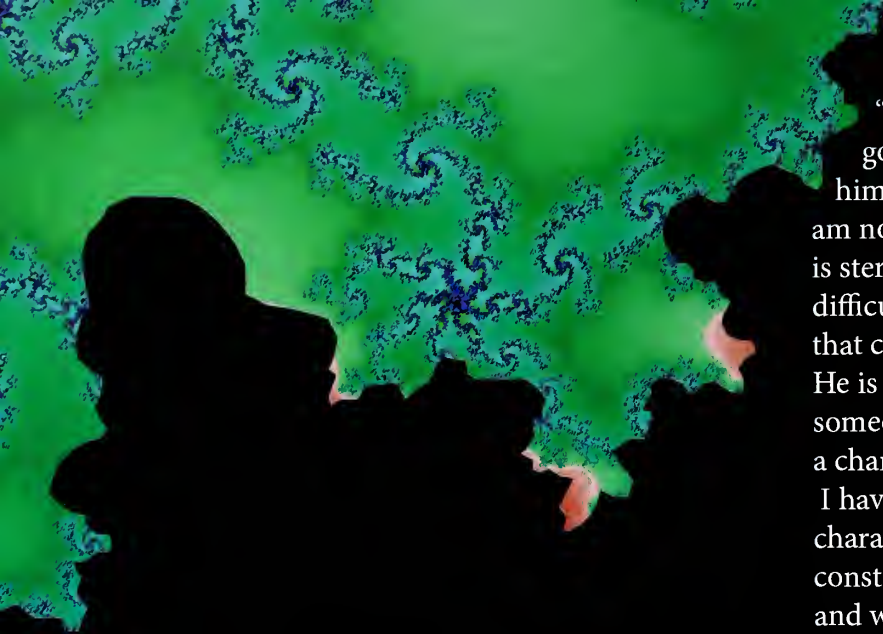
"Why don't you ever go outside?" he asks.

"I won't be able to stand to see how people look at me. In the beginning I came here wanting to get away and heal and before I knew it more than ten years had passed and I became accustomed to living this way. I don't want to be a part of a world that constantly discriminates against someone because they are different. I have no friends or family," I say, taking a shallow breath.

"But aren't you lonely?" he asked.

"I used to be, but not anymore. Besides, I hear what they say about me when they walk by. If they were to see me as I really look, they would be disgusted," I respond. I give him a weak smile and begin to get up from the table and clear the dishes.

"Did you like your dinner?" I ask.



"It was great, the best I've had in a really long time. Thank you. Well I'll be leaving now, good night, Amanda," he says and turns to walk towards the back door.

"It's cold tonight; even though the days are getting warmer the nights are still chilly. Do you have a place to sleep? You could stay here if you want," I utter

He stops midstride and responds, "I got places."

"If you wish to stay, you are welcome to," I did not want to pressure him.

"Well maybe I should stay so that you don't get lonely".

I have lived alone for so long that I suppressed the urge to laugh at his remark. I led him to the third bedroom located next to my private parlor, not wanting the draft from the window in the second bedroom to reach him. "Alex, why don't you take a bath before bed? Give me your clothes and I will wash them for you, meanwhile you can wear one of my gardening shirts to go to sleep"

"Thank you, Amanda, I am not a dirty person, it's just that I haven't had a chance to take a bath and..." his voice cracks.

What has this poor boy undergone to be in this world so young and obviously so alone, dependent on others for a safe place to sleep and a plate of food to eat? Something inside me yearns to help him.

"Alex, do you have a place to live?" I ask once again.

"No. My parents died five years ago and I have been living in foster homes but they always send me back for one reason or another. I hate it there so I ran away. I don't need anybody, besides, it's not like anyone is looking for me."

How many times have I uttered those same words?

"Don't worry Alex, you are welcome here. Have a good night." Once I left him in his room allowing him his privacy, I can't help but be surprised that I am not afraid to have a strange boy in my home. There is sternness in his eyes that reflects the endurance of a difficult life but there is also an overwhelming sadness that cannot be hidden beneath his tough exterior. He is a lot like me: hesitant to trust, unbelieving that someone could look beyond the outside and give him a chance.

I have chosen my life and made the best of it. The characters in my stories and adventures are my constant companions. I rejoice in their achievements and weep with their losses. In the worlds I create I am never the outcast. I want to help Alex believe in himself and expect more out of life, I have a need to at least try. This is my last thought before I fall fast asleep. Alex is gone when I woke up this morning but it is now dinner time and he is back.

"I thought you might want some company," he says.

"You thought right. Sit down and eat," I say.

"What do you do all day here alone?" he asks.

"Lots of things," I answer. I still do not know him well enough to trust him with my secret life as a writer. I continue to tell him about the mundane tasks that I perform every day.

This has become our routine for the last two months. Alex spends every night in the spare bedroom and is gone by morning, always to return to have dinner with me. I never ask what he did during the daylight hours, but we do talk about many interesting things. I tell him about my youth and my life before the accident. He has begun to open up telling me about his love of books. He makes me laugh when he tells me the mischievous pranks he would play on his foster parents. We have become fast friends and I realize how alike we really are.

"Alex, I want to show you something, follow me," I walk into my parlor. I open the door and step inside. "What are we doing here?"

"This is my special place. Here is where I vent my frustration on those fools on the outside. This is where I laugh and cry and yell. This place, what I do here, keeps me sane," I said. I begin to tell him how I began writing my novels, using the neighborhoods inhabitants as my characters, building lives and adventures for them. I tell him how they have allowed me to live experiences that I would otherwise never have known. I want to show him how I have turned my life around after despair. I have closed myself

out from a world that I feel no need to be a part of. I have built my own world centered on my comfort and specifications.

"After I wrote my first story I felt like someone had lifted a large boulder that had been blocking an overflowing ravine. It amuses me to know these fools, as I commonly address them, don't even recognize themselves in my novels or speculate they have had a part in the creation of such magnificent achievements. They most assuredly spend their nights curled up with one of my books in their hands. On occasion, cry over the loss of their favorite character or hate the one person who in reality is based on them. Now you understand why I call them fools? Should you ever feel the need to express yourself, you are welcome here. Nobody will judge you in this room. You can be a hero or a villain, rich or poor anything you choose to be. Just one thing: Don't ever limit yourself. The only person that can stop you...is you", I say, amazed that I could share my secret with Alex."

"Thank you Amanda. I won't tell anyone," he says.

"There is no need to thank me. You are my friend, the only one that I have had in a very long time. There will always be those who view my way of living as bizarre, I see it as original and now I have someone to share it with."

"Yes you do," he smiles.

I close the door and return to kitchen to clean up. Once everything is in its place we both go to our rooms for the night. I am hopeful that the things that I have shared with Alex will in some way help him. Today we will be eating a little earlier than usual since I have to wake up very early. Finishing dinner before Alex arrives I suddenly hear loud voices coming from the front of the house. I walk to the front window overlooking the cross street to get a better look. The yells get louder as I near the window. I move the curtain over to see what seems to be a mob forming on the sidewalk. I look to the middle of the street to observe what it is that has caught their attention and cannot believe what I am seeing. Alex is in the middle of a crowd of five young men being pushed by one and then the other. They are yelling things at him, but I cannot make out all that they are saying. All I hear are bits and pieces of conversation and curses. From what I hear, I know they are talking about me. One boy suddenly punches Alex in the stomach and while he doubles over in pain, applies his knee to Alex's nose sending him sprawling on the ground. I hear Alex

telling
them to
stop talking
about me and

in his way trying to defend me. I look over to the people on the sidewalk, hoping that someone will help him, but no one is taking even a step.

"Oh my God, please someone do something," I whisper to myself. They continue to push him around and punch him until I can no longer make out his features, now covered in blood. I have to do something. I have to help him. I pull away from the window and run to the front door. I suddenly stop. I have not opened this door in eleven years. My heart is pounding in my chest. I try to draw in a deep breath but all that comes out are short rasping gasps of air, filling my chest with excruciating pain. The sweat dripping from my hands, down my wrists and moistening the cuffs of the long sleeve shirt, force me to tighten my grip around the door knob. I don't think I can do it. I don't think I can go outside. But Alex needs me. I have to help him.

I wipe my hands on the sides of pants. I gather up all of my strength, turn the knob, open the door wide and step outside. I shield my eyes from the brightness of the sun and begin to approach the circle surrounding Alex. As loudly I my chest will allow I yell, "STOP!" I can feel everyone's wide eyed stares. I can hear their muffled comments behind hands cupped to their mouths. "Leave. Him. Alone" I said slowly piercing the youths with a look full of anger. The crowd parts at my approach. I kneel down beside Alex now lying on the ground and help him to sit up. "Are you ok?"

"I'll be ok, but you shouldn't be out here," he says.

"I had to help you," I respond.

"Thank you, Amanda," he says with a clumsy smile appearing on his beaten face.

I help him to stand. I turn to walk back to my house, holding on to Alex's elbow, facing the crowd. "Have a good look, isn't this what you have all been waiting for, to see the monster?" I ask and stand very



still waiting for a response from them. "I can hear you when you talk about me, you know. Does it make you feel better to treat others bad? Are all of you so perfect that you can cast your venom on others for being different? I am not crazy or a witch. I am a person with real feelings and none of you ever bothered to get to know me. Well now you do not have to wonder any more. Now you have enough juicy details about me to last you for years. Let's go, Alex." Once again we begin to walk towards my house. On my way up the steps, the red haired neighbor from across the street approaches and with a bowed head says, "I'm sorry," and walks away. I step through the front door and shut it behind me. I lean against it, my heart beating so fast I have to breathe slowly. I whisper, "Why were they attacking you, Alex?"

"They started saying all these awful things about you and me. I tried to ignore them but they kept following me. The guys who always play basketball across the street see me come out of your house every morning. Today they started saying horrible things about how I was spending the night with, with..." he stops ashamed to continue.

"With...?" I inquire, placing my hand reassuringly on his shoulder. "It's ok, tell me"

"With...the neighborhood monster", he answers; lowering his head, wiping at a cut on his cheek where the blood flow is beginning to cease.

"I hate them all," he says.

"Oh, sweetheart you are way too angry. I was just like you all those years ago. Angry at the world and at the circumstances that left me deformed. There is nothing good that can come out of so much anger."

"Why did you go outside?" he asks.

"You are my friend, Alex and saving you was more important than anything else," I say.

"Thank you, Amanda. You are a wonderful person. So much better than all of them," he says.

I feel an ache deep in my chest just looking at Alex. He is so young and in so much pain. I have learned to channel my energy into something positive, my writing. Through the lives and experiences of

my characters I am able to continue living. But Alex is so negative and I am afraid of what will happen to him. I have to do something. "Remember what I told you, Alex, there are other ways to vent your anger, you are safe and loved here," I say as I leave to go to my room.

Tonight's dinner is forgotten.

I wake up in the morning expecting Alex to be gone. I enter my parlor needing to go over

some material before I sent it to my publisher. I have finally finished my latest novel and am now ready to share it with the world. I walk into the room and come to an abrupt

"I can't believe how many years have passed since Alex came into my life. This year when the flowers once again begin to dance with the song of the wind, the long hours spent writing, beginning to affect me. I grow tired easily and my vision blurs when I write."

stop. Alex is slumped over the computer, fast asleep. I approach him and take a quick glimpse at the screen. From what I can see, he has been working for hours. I take a deep breath and gently lay my hand on his shoulder, not wanting to frighten him.

"Alex, sweetheart, wake up."

He begins to awaken, looking up at me, he exclaims, "Amanda...it was amazing. Once I started I couldn't stop. It's probably no good but it's all about me. Everything I feel and think is there. All the good things and bad things I have ever experienced are there. I even wrote about my parents and a vacation we once took to Bear Mountain. I couldn't have been more than nine at the time. I never remembered that vacation until now...How can I ever thank you," he whispers.

I smile at him and say, "You already have."

I can't believe how many years have passed since Alex came into my life. This year when the flowers once again begin to dance with the song of the wind, the long hours spent writing, beginning to affect me. I grow tired easily and my vision blurs when I write. I am thankful that Alex is here to help me. He always comes to visit me after he finishes teaching his last literature class and we eat dinner together. He writes wonderful stories, but he never reads them to anyone but me.

Although he no longer lives with me, we still spend a lot of time together. He helps me with my latest projects enabling me to bring a more modern turn to my dialogue. I have been able to expand my writing now that I no longer spend all my time looking out my window, having reacquainted myself with the world and its many adventures. We have grown to be an amazing team. He became my son

and I his mother and each other's best friend.

"Hi Amanda," he says, entering the parlor.

"Alex, I wanted to talk to you before I leave to go with Anne to the garden committee meeting"

"What's wrong, are you ok?" he asks.

"Yes, of course. I want to say some things to you. You have given me so much that I cannot find the words to thank you. You filled a void in my life that I had never known existed. You have made me so proud of you. You have grown into a wonderful man and an amazing writer. It is time you share this gift with the world. They might not be deserving of your greatness, but what can you do, they are only ignorant fools. You have been an extension of my hand for many years. You have been my inspiration since the day I caught you in my linen closet. I love you as my son. I am very proud of the man you have become.

"I love you too, but why are you telling me all of this," he asks.

"I'm tired Alex, I don't want to write anymore. I just want to live life and enjoy real adventures," I said.

"But you can't quit. You are A.J. Writer,"

"Oh, Alex I have not been A.J. Writer for a really long time... you have. Don't you see it son, how talented you are?" I ask.

"What are you getting at?" he asks.

"You know exactly what I mean," I get up from my chair and start to walk out of the room. As I pass the desk I look at him and place my pen on top of the closed laptop and continue to walk out, half closing the door behind me. After a few moments, I see him walk hesitantly to the desk and sit down. His fingers begin to move across the computer keys, his features relaxing into a wide grin. Once he closes the computer and exits the room, I slowly reenter the parlor and pick up what he has printed. I smile triumphantly when at the lower right hand part of the page he signed. A.J.Writer.



Featured Artist

Levi Lunon



Pathway
Digital Photography



Bus Ride
Silver Gelatin

I have been surrounded by art throughout my life. Ever since I was little, my Aunt and Uncle have taken me under their wing and always tried to expose me to as much art as possible. They both graduated from Road Island School of Design (RISD) with a BFA. While my Aunt is the fine artist with painting and drawing, my Uncle's focus in Photography was my true inspiration to pick up a camera.

Through the lens, I attempt to stimulate a sense of childhood wonder and nostalgia of a simpler time. I believe that we don't take enough time out of our lives to remember and enjoy the small things

in life that we used to think were so fascinating as a youth. For the most part I enjoy using a digital format of photography for the ease in which photos can be edited and adjusted, but I try to focus more on using a more physical medium such as film. The act of mixing and working with chemicals to develop my work puts me in a meditative state that turns my enlarger into an easel and the light into my paintbrush.

I plan on finishing my AA here in Florida and moving to New York for art school to get my BFA in photography while working in galleries, exposing and expanding myself out into the art world.



Featured Artist: Levi Lunon



Inner Child
Silver Gelatin

Featured Artist: Levi Lunon



Dancing Lights
Silver Gelatin

Learning

By Alex Haimovich

"Let's get married,"
he suggests, idly.
She smiles but remains silent.
He thinks she is happy.

He pays for dinner
and holds her close
so the stark line their bodies make
quickly slicks with sweat.

"I didn't want to do this now,"
she says, eyes leaking.
He says nothing
all the way to the train station.

"We're just in different places,"
she tries to reassure him.
He doesn't return her hug;
why should he, when he isn't enough?

He meets himself too soon
and is transfixed, like Narcissus
She's in a different place,
but has a great deal of potential.

"Let's get married,"
she suggests, idly.
He smiles but remains silent.
She thinks he is happy.



Impression
Marker
Adonech Poyser

Grunge He'art Aftermath

By Arezu Motaghedi

Chipped paint like coconut shavings,
Cracks in concrete,
Old graffeti;
It's degrading
All to nothing;
Unstable stairwells and metal rusting.

Take a strip of the ghettos,
A slice of run down buildings,
And carve out ancient tombstones;
See the shapes reflect the filthy.
With Broken glass,
Discarded bottlecaps,
Oil, and grease like sheats of sweat;
It's grunge at its finest.

Our artificial warmth is no more,
As the safety of our love, lies in shambles on the floor.
Just as blankets torn;
Devastation with no form.

You sold my foundation,
All that meant the two of us.
The aftermath is devastation.
There's only cobwebs and a mist of dust.

Our happiness was once blissful purity,
But now is lacerated in to obscurity
It hangs like light beams by one cord
Disconnected from the source.





Pardon My French
Black & White
Salomon O. Carrasco





Untitled
Recycled Paper
Cassandra Anda

Retriever

By Arelie Farasi

Damn, I wish this was somethin' stronger. I glance at the glass of Diet Coke in my hand, half-heartedly contemplating spicing it up with rum. Or if I feel real inspired, making it into a Long Island iced tea.

Realistically speaking, I doubt I'll muster the energy to attempt either. I'm not even halfway finished with the daunting task of my weekly housecleaning, yet my body is crashing like an airplane with two failing engines. As I mull over the ramifications of maintaining a clean home with two young boys, an outdoorsy husband, and an overactive puppy with access to a doggie-door live in the same house, my eyelids begin to droop. Just before sleep seizes me in its tenacious clutches, I place my glass on the end table.

A vibration under my butt catapults me from my doze, followed by another. Baffled, I spring up and pat my back pockets, but as I thought, my cell phone isn't there. Heart racing from the abrupt wake-up call, I lean over the couch peering carefully at the crevice between the cushions. And there's the phone, right between the two beige cushions. A frown mingles with confusion on my face as I grab the cell phone and examine it.

Four problems immediately come to mind. First, the cell phone isn't mine. Second, it's not my husband's. Thirdly, my sons are six and eight and don't own cell phones. But the clincher? There hasn't been company over since book club last Tuesday. Ten days with no one over, or at least company that I know of.

Insecurity floods my mind, and without an ounce of regret, I flip open the pink Razor. The phone owner's privacy is meaningless to me. After clicking through the box stating nineteen missed calls, I stop at the background picture.

I don't know if I want to vomit or weep hysterically as I continue to stare at the picture. The picture is of my neighbor and his two-year-old daughter, meaning the phone belongs to my twenty-something, extremely attractive neighbor. Who, by the way, is not in book club.

The proverbial knife in the back hits me hard—I collapse onto the couch, my world crumbling around me. There's been no indication of David's unhappiness in our relationship. Sure, Carolyn is

gorgeous, and I could stand to shed a few pounds that I'd never lost after having my youngest son, but I've apparently deluded myself into thinking that he didn't mind.

The key in the front door lock startles me out of my downward spiraling misery. It morphs into anger. I work full-time and still maintain a house for our family—how dare he?

"Hey, honey, I'm back from fishing," David calls as he passes the threshold, closing the door behind him. If that's what you were doing!

I'm instantly glad the boys are spending the day at my parents' house. They shouldn't have to hear this. The moment he walks into the kitchen, I jump up and march in to meet him, holding the cell phone in front of me. My husband stops about ten feet away from me, eyeing me warily.

"Do you know whose phone this is?" I ask venomously. He opens his mouth as if to say something, but closes it. I continue, "It's Carolyn's! You want to explain how her cell phone ended up stuck in our sofa?"

Bewilderment slowly transforms into panic on David's features. He rushes forward, grabbing at both of my hands. Clutching them like lifelines, he stammers over and over, "I swear Sarah, I'm not having an affair! I don't know how the phone got there."

At that moment the sound of the flap on the doggie door interrupts us. Our yellow lab trots past, a pup on a mission, with what looks like a tire iron in his mouth. I stare in disbelief, beginning to realize what this might mean.

I follow Ace into the family room. Sure enough, his hind end is sticking up in the air as he shoves his face underneath the couch to deposit his treasure. I walk over and lift the bottom skirt on the sofa. Underneath is a trove of things ranging from a signed baseball to fluorescent light bulbs to a racy red bra. That's when the full name of Ace's breed comes to mind: Labrador Retriever.

God, I really need that drink now. Guiltily, I glance at David, who is wearing an indignant expression: I better make it a double.





Too Much
Etching
Bianca Triozzi



i

By Enrique Luis Hartmann-Arregui

I,
Want to walk with a naked nymph in the nude,
with her red hair and a hula hoop,
I'll bring the music and the sloppy juice.

I,
Want to swim with a siren
in a Hollywood beach,
the moon full and the stars shooting into reach.

I,
Want to fly hand in hand with an angel,
going upwards in a 90 degree angle.
Topping out, making out, falling down
into a heaven bound, bite-the-bottom-lip-lose-my-mind-french-kiss-spiral.

Featured Artist

Jaime Restrepo



Break
Digital Photography



Under Construction
Digital Photography

I am unable to name how or when I initially got into art, but I remember having the desire to create things since I was a child.

Now going to art school I have been learning so much more about techniques, styles, aesthetics and concepts that art to me just seems to become more and more fascinating as I explore it and its ever-changing nature.

Whether it is an object, a feeling, or the simplicity of a gesture, I simply aim to celebrate and preserve what attracts me by shooting it.. As a visual artist, I consider aesthetics to be the fundamental aspect of art, hence my images are firstly constructed to be visually appealing, then intellectually or

emotionally stimulating.

Much of my current photography concentrates on depicting urban icons as they take an identity of their own. I intensify their beauty as it contrasts with their commonality. However, this set of photographs is about the relationship of individuals with their space as it affects them emotionally. I aim to convey that mood to the viewer.

I am currently putting all my energy into learning the technical, practical, and conceptual aspects of photography, but I also plan on visiting other mediums in the near future as I move on to get my Bachelors of Fine Arts, and then perhaps shoot towards a Master of Education.

Featured Artist: Jaime Restrepo



Tight
Digital Photography



Guitar Player
Digital Photography



Beaded Sandal
Clay Sculpture
Patricia Kobelin

What's the Point?

By Alex Haimovich

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
No, I think not. Though you're just as hot,
It's warmth I could get used to.

Indeed, if I would compare you to anything at all it would be
the fall,
The season of feeling not-so-dandy and bulging sacks of
scrumptious candy.

But not so fast or so sweet, Honey,
That would be jumping the gun.
While the Summer is sunny and the fall is glum,
Justice can't quite be done with a simple pun.

So, that leaves me where?
At me desk, in my chair with an aching heart and a lonely
stare
At noting in particular.

Writing about love is an unjust quantification.
Trying to put your feelings to a meter
And convey them to a stolid reader...
Neither party has that kind of qualification.
So take a moment, everybody, and let the ego peter out.

Existential damage control for a fate-stained soul.
Ink-strained paper not quite up to par to describe the tar that
tapers my will to will.

So, then. What's the point of being read?
Maybe I hope to turn her head
(Not to mention the direction of my life
and what could turn out to be my wife)

What I'm really trying to say
In my roundabout sort of why
Is that my dysphoria won't do anything for ya,
And that love should make you want to write about it,
Not actually do so.

Tiles

By Mark Meneses

My feet were plastered to the tiles,
Dirty, cold, intimidating,
Like the men around me,
Pointing and flashing their teeth, screaming
Down hallways
Like light chasing darkness
From a desert's bright night.
The air was recycled,
Processed, thick and pasty,
A haze of dread and headaches
Flooding our ankles.
I mourned old routines, pedaling time
Between my fingers.
Here we become one.
Here, under screeched and taunts
We unify.
Here is where we go
When everywhere else is just too dangerous;
Dangerous because it's real,
Dangerous because it's happy.
This is where we attempt second chances
Without ever given a first.
We judge and assume from safe distances,
Trapping each other in our minds,
Reading shadows.
Dirt grows from under our nails
And the air wheezes regret
And cold stains of failure,
Tightening around our necks, against walls.
We fall into traps,
Sway under pressure,
And an innocent bridge now begins to creak.
Hands are rugged, stone on stone
Grinding for a spark of light.
Here we remember to be forgotten,
To envelop in hope and, ultimately, doubt.
Here we blister, bleed,
Pretend to hate and hate to pretend.
We stick to the scratching and the deteriorating floor,
Where we soar
By walking inside the faded lines
On the floor's lifeless tiles.



Self Portrait
Solar Plate Print
Erika Hagarty



Comfortable Loneliness
Digital Photography
Marina Veiga



Control

By Joshua Hernandez

*I*t was the same routine every day. My Master would come in through the door and set himself in front of the mirror that was embellished in rubies. I would always stare at him with my glassy eyes with my mouth wide open, gawking, because I never had the power to retract my jaw. And he would be seated on his stool, waiting for those females to come and apply some weird, white, powdery substance onto his pallid, creased filled face. He would always be the center of attention, making jokes that could easily stir up even the corpses in a cemetery. And all I had was a shelf with thousands of others just like me, staring at nothingness. Afterwards, he would just stagger his way out the door and not come back till at least five minutes later. During that time, I got extremely lonely. I would always remain paralyzed; trapped within my rectangular shaped clear, glass case with nothing to help rid me of my boredom. All that there was, was those stupid dolls! They don't even talk to me. They spend an enormous amount of time just perched on my shelf, accumulating dust on their wooden bodies while I remained the only one that was in excellent condition. I sometimes thought if, whether or not, they were envious of how our Master treated us differently, but since they don't speak, it gets pretty hard to interpret the meanings behind their glassy orbs. They could haunt a lost soul for eternity; that's why I been afraid of them, even if I am one of them. When he returned, not much has changed except for him; he wore clothes that were more formal: a black tuxedo with a white silk shirt underneath and a pair of polished black shoes. He would always be filled with

elation around the time of curtain call. He would open my encasement and seize me, carrying me to the stage. And then after his performance, he would place me back into my encasement, leaving me alone in the cloak of the night.

I miss the old days. I use to go everywhere with him; use to sit at his kitchen table and watch him eat as he made faces at me. What happened...? I guess instant success got to his mind? He forgot that I was his very first toy; the very first one that his parents bought him, my Master. I use to sleep with him. I use to be his partner in crime when we both played as the villains and his dad played as the hero. However, my Master, present day, doesn't do these things anymore, though. Instead, he spends his time working on new dolls for his act, but none of them have brought him instant success like I have brought him. I am the one that brings in his income every day, and draws more attention to our show (not his). He chooses not to believe that he needs me, but after trying to do a show without me and failing, he finally understood that he did, after 56 years, needed me for money. So he does use me to his advantage, and then forgets about me afterwards. I grown use to it. Those light blue walls that brought me so much joy when he was a kid, washed away into the pearly, white walls that surround me this instant. That's what I saw happen over the years- we were just like the colors on the walls, fading from color to no color, love to no love; just like when a child loves a toy so much but then throws it aside because reality sets in as they get older.

I remember the day when I was stuffed in

my Master's briefcase. That was the day he decided to look for a job as a ventriloquist. He has gotten better at it over the years I must admit. He was one of a kind, and was pretty amazing at drinking water while I, supposedly, talked (he practiced a lot before the auditions). I couldn't see anything of course, but I could hear everything that was happening outside. I could hear the cars honking their horns and the drivers hissing at each other. But after a brief period of time, I couldn't hear them anymore; instead I heard the echoes of thousands of feet slamming onto the floor.

The movement of his pace was moving the brief case and I knew when he would stop and walk. I could still recall this woman's voice that has been vibrating in my ears for the pass decade. Her voice was hoarse and deep, but still sounded feminine; kind of like how a smoker's voice sounds after a few years of puffing. She stopped him (and I knew because the briefcase wasn't moving side to side

anymore), and asked if my Master could spare some change. He replied that he couldn't and she threw a rancorous fit: cursing him and other things that I didn't know because I was squashed inside a limited amount of space, but I felt the briefcase tumble to the floor. My head thudded on the sides and pain shot through my body, pulsating all the way to my wooden toes. I heard my Master cry for help and it was sad that I couldn't move nor yell for help for him, but he had a voice. He could do it, if he wanted to... and he did. In little than two minutes, authority figures took her away while she yelled, "I CURSE YOU. I CURSE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART! I HOPE YOU GET YOUR JUST DESSERTS!" I heard her breathing hard as the police announced that it was time for her to go; I heard slaps. She bellowed harsh words to my Master as she exited with the authoritarians, forcefully. He must have felt embarrassed having the spotlight to himself in such a situation; nonetheless, he still gained back his

confidence, striding through the Big Apple's crowds. In the end, he made it to the interview on time and got the job, which made him into the successful person that he is present day (along with me, of course!).

I had my mind on that woman's voice for some time now. Her shrieking was terrifying and frightened me, leaving me colder inside than I was outside. Her words dug deep within my consciousness and years have passed since the incident. I can hear her screaming sometimes during the night when I was alone, surrounded by these four walls; her voice

drowning out the silence of the night, I CURSE YOU. I CURSE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART! I HOPE YOU GET YOUR JUST DESSERTS! I don't know how anyone could sit there and wish harm upon someone else; especially my wonderful Master! He spoke the truth and told her what he had. Unless he lied but I would never know. I was being carried around in a briefcase; besides it wouldn't be a problem if he didn't share, right? Like the old saying goes, Sharing is caring; but I

didn't know what she would have used it for. She could have been a person with drug problems... but maybe she could have been a person with dilemmas of some sort? But no matter how she gets manipulated in my mind, she still winds up in there; kind of like how a fly draws near a light at night; they always seem to go near it even when they think it's harmless, and then ZAP! However, her sound cannot be zapped away.

Could my Master be evil? Maybe sinister because of the fact that he never gave a penny to a helpless person... including me. It was night now, and I stood in my glass encasement once more- alone. I thought about the question, pondering away at all the flaws that my Master may have. After years of being right by his side, I came to a conclusion that he had many flaws; however it wasn't him physically, it was him mentally. He use to make me feel safe. I use to believe that he was my sentinel, my protector, my "guardian angel", but apparently that angel has

"In little than two minutes, authority figures took her away while she yelled, "I CURSE YOU. I CURSE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART! I HOPE YOU GET YOUR JUST DESSERTS!" I heard her breathing hard as the police announced that it was time for her to go; I heard slaps."

flown away; vanishing behind the covers of the black fog that now envelops me. I feel completely used. I feel extremely out-of-place! But most importantly, I feel uncomfortable with him. These are things that have been growing inside of me for quite some time (possibly years), and now they have reached their limit. I love my Master dearly, but I wish at times that I could be the one moving my mouth instead of him. I always hoped that I would someday be able to move, stretch out my fingers, and jump around like a child who just won an unlimited supply of candy. But all he has left me has been a case, these four walls around me, and a bunch of dolls that can't even communicate with me- I'M STILL ALONE! I can't talk, can't move, and can't produce any emotion whatsoever. I am just a lump of wood, painted and craved, with nothing in this world but him. He sometimes would yell at me and throw me around, that's another thing I forgot about- the abuse; the verbal and physical abuse. Any bad news he would receive would end with me plastered to the nearest item. I AM TRIED OF IT! But at the same time, I like him. I was his first toy, I was his first friend before he made any... real ones, but after a while he got bored of me until he found a way to make a profit out of me. I never knew how beautiful something so ugly could seem. I also had no clue, or any oblivious idea how the factual truth attempted to constrict me, leaving me broken every little bit inside; those shards hurt. They plunged me into perpetual darkness, mocking me in its lifeless insanity of unjustifiable hoaxes. I wish I was real...

The next day was unorthodox toward the ending, but in the beginning of the day, everything seemed normal; the same routine as every day since I've been held prisoner in this austere building. The same shelf, the same plain white walls, and the same glass box were still present, but on a different day. My Master came in early wanting to practice his new act. The show didn't start till seven o'clock, but he would always like to entertain the people around him, so he would grab me and make me do things to bring joy to them (while it brought misery to me). My Master... what could I say? Hours passed by and the time drew nearer to seven. We were backstage and I could hear people entering the auditorium, laughing and talking loudly, like a wild pack of hyenas. If I had a heart, it would be beating at this moment. What do humans call that emotion... nervousness? I should be use to it by now, but I am not. I could see everyone scrambling around: gathering wardrobes, make-up artists trying

to find the right tone of color for skins, and even the assistants, who don't usually do anything, were up flailing around like chickens without heads. A woman yelled, proposing that there were two minutes to show time. My Master opened my encasement and seized me in his arms. He quickly made his way to the side of the stage, waiting for his grand entrance. "Here is what you all have been waiting for; the one, the only, John B. White!" A guy with a microphone said. We made our way to the front of the stage while cheers and applause echoed throughout theaters. He took a seat on the chair that was set in the middle of the stage, and placed me on his lap. Everything was going fine for about a few minutes until my Master began trembling underneath me. He was gasping for air and was swinging back and forth on his posterior, losing his grip on me. He got up and placed me on the seat, and he stood before the crowd. Everyone was awed, and some held their hands to their mouths. My Master took his last breath and fell to the floor. I wanted to get up to help him, but lifeless limbs wouldn't let me; instead, I felt liquid coursing through my body and a soft thump protruded in my chest. I was baffled. I knew I wasn't dead but not alive, yet I feel something deep inside of me. My hair fell in layers over my face, and I could actually feel my skin getting softer; I am bendable! I tried to flex my fingers and succeeded; these simple actions brought me joy. Joy that I haven't felt since I was first bought in the toy department store! I got up from the seat and went to my Master, who was lying motionless on the floor. The audience were cheering and applauding louder than before, taking in the experience as part of the show. I stood before my Master; but he wasn't human anymore. He was wooden, and his hair was plastic- glued to his head and all stitched up. My stitches were gone. I wondered what could have changed. Something must have happened for this to reverse us in physically state.

Maybe the woman took part in this act? Maybe she is the reason I have life? Maybe that curse really worked on my Master? I won't argue with the fact. I don't have strings attach to me and I am free to move, so I would salute her if she was the cause! But all humans know now is that he disappeared that night, but left his son in charge of his business. And that is what I would usually tell everyone who would usually ask where the great John B. White is; that I, his "son", Joseph White, took over his talents and that I was now in complete and total control...



Pleasant Dreams
Ink
Salomon O. Carrasco

No Tears, No Fears

By Fabiana Rodriguez

Through the eyes of a mother,
Through the cries of her son,
To the scattered clothes, beds left undone,
Tears of sorrow, of hope long ago gone,
Smiles and laughter now pain and fear,
The sounds of his footsteps, she dreads to hear,
Holding her child running wild and free,
For in the distance, freedom she'll see,
A life of safety, no longer pains,
A life where violence no longer stains,
A heart once empty will beat again.

The Shadow of Death

By Bradley Vattilana

He stands there staring out from every doorway,
Red glare burning equivalent to a thousand suns.
Hatred radiating from his hollow piercing eyes.
Cloaked in shadows of fear and death.

He moves unseen in our word, bringing pain and chaos.

He picks his targets one by one,
Devising clever ways for them to meet him.
Their final fate.

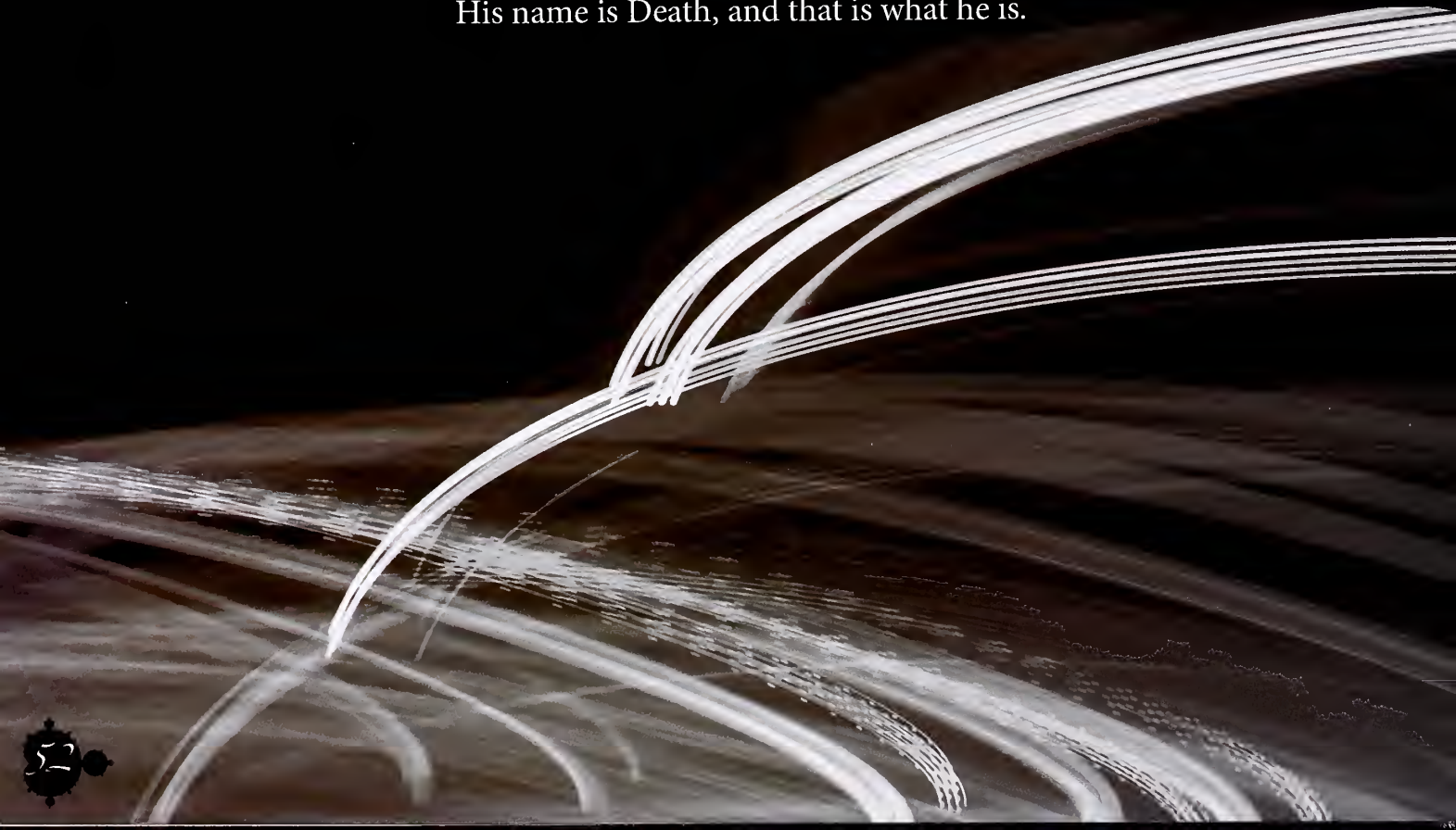
He is more than good, he is more than evil.
Transcended both, above all, he is a force,
He is a pure force of nature, rooted in destruction.

His power is absolute for all have an end.

He is chaos, he is order, he is law.
He can be resisted, fought, cured;
But he will always be there waiting,
Forever in the shadows.

For he is the end.

His name is Death, and that is what he is.





Greater Than The World
Pencil
Adonech Poyser



Under This Light

By Mark Meneses

This is where my breath lingers.
Under this light
For my mind to spill oceans
As I watch words drown.
They hold onto each other
While I splash waves into their world.
I divulge to them as I part the sea,
My sea.
These are my victims
With no stories to tell
Except my own.
They desperately gasp
And swallow blue stars in the mist.
I pick them out;
Which ones float,
Which ones survive,
And which ones never had enough time-
My time-
To ever have a fair chance.
I gather clouds
Under this light
To throw out the weak ones
With no sign of mercy.
They wash away the dead
And spare the living
For a much worse fate.
I challenge them to prove me wrong,
To tell me their story,
Their memories and tragedies,
So I can tell them mine
Under this light.
Under my light.



Beautiful Experience of Liberation
Mixed Media
Chaya

Verbal Collision

(Open letter to my children)

By The Madd Writah

Some say there's freedom of speech
Yet, still carefully choosing your wordplay
Filtering my subject and verb agreement contract infractions breach
Threatening me with verbal impeach
But you know me
If I see it....I writes
Experience it.....I write
Politicking and sharing war stories.... I write
Ink has me feenin' to share my vision despite
The illegal file sharing
Taking credit for the works of others, ignoring copyrights
Preying on my mind state
Inserting boundaries and limits on my originality through supply and demands
Feasting on my inexperience as if I'm the primate
No looking me in the eye, then no particulars for shaking hands
Shit at this rate
All I ever wanted was to educate
To my fellow man
Whom ignored my plea by walking away and vowed, "Man, I'm straight"
Understand, for me it's too late
Voluntarily deployed to the frontline
In the mist of this jungle
Hands on experience, which is the best, one day at a time reaching one's mind
Strategic maneuvers in due time
Ball-point locked and loaded, preparing for lyrical rumble
No forced or direct fumbles
Poetically humble
Machiavelli inspiring me to maintain despite the tumbles
Through my SKULL candy, as those words mumble
War of words causing security to crumble
Searching and Prowling on this informative mission
Eventually the trap will collapse at once
Aware the wrong syllable will have visitors listening
So if there's dope planted on me, I'll fight it
No currency for a defense attorney that's currently on payroll
Lady liberty ruling against me, innocent but surely indicted
Conscious took its toll
Crashing fatally in the Prix
When forced off the road or open fired upon in traffic
Dead upon impact collision wrapped around a tree

Exercising my partial first amendment rights in a time that's
drastic
Ambushed in front of your Nana's home
Black on black street justice...don't believe that shit
For it wasn't just a coincidence, nor did I owe anyone
But bill collectors
Targeted for taking aim at the "Agenda" using my pen as a concealed
weapon
Taking two to the dome
Talking that tough guy smack over the phone
Never will they bring their ass to the hood sector
Dismiss any allegations of me being high or D-U-I prone
In a society that isolates the lost souls
Rewarding disruptive behavior just to reside in the hands of the demonic
zone
From what I was told
Tapping into my network, habits and into my life
Death threats via text messages, phone calls and miscellaneous notes
causing emotional strife
Demanded to turn in all my original works and files
Failure to comply will take a loved one's life
Suddenly disappearing without a trace is no longer my style
Waking up from the embedded lies and trife
No longer slaving for cash
Doing this for the unification, art and unconditional love
Aware of the man made diseases and bacterial war
Placing the As-I-Die-Slow virus in the lava of mosquitoes
Millions infested unknowingly as my own kind is the source
I know it's a part of some plan
To reduce an overpopulated planet
Tainting our water resources, depending more on bottled water
Please understand,
I'm aware that this life has value to it got dammit
Eventually taxed, shortened and cut off entirely
No need to run, AMERO's are now being accepted at the border
RFID Chip variety
DENIED!!!
Blasphemy in a society that continuously lie to me
Representing for the movement of mankind in this booth
In the event of my demise
Just know that daddy sought out for the truth
Written in the depths of many books, you'll find the proof
Love the two of you eternally as you can find me with the daily sunrise
Military mind....Salute!!



I'm Ahead of Myself
Clay Sculpture
Diane Karmiol

Mountain of the Purple Bedroom

By Sara Schwartz

*I*t is large, overpowering the other objects in my bedroom. It has many layers, and the higher up you get, the more one can find out about me. It is cluttered, and is the cause for many arguments between my aseptic mother and I. It is my safe haven. It is my information source. It is my desk.

Down in the valley and into the drawers lay mysterious objects. The bottom drawer, similar to the blue river that runs through the mountain, also known as the lowest point in the valley, is my favorite. It is fresh. It is colorful, just like a river. It is full of markers, crayons, and a few odd shaped pens that I never had the will power to throw away. This is where my creativity is stored. Where the colors of my mind can flow onto paper. In the next layer is the source of all my problems, like that one dry tree in a valley that is vulnerable to a fire. This drawer is filled with clean notebooks, ones that somehow disappear every time I need one. This drawer is filled with the Spanish notecards that I created dos years ago but never had the guts to tirar. This drawer is filled with wires and chargers to electronics I am pretty sure I don't own anymore. This drawer is filled with 5 calculators, each one bought because I lost the one I bought before it. This drawer is filled with the mystery of why I have it in the first place. The top drawer is filled with

homework. I must read three books spoken in an English I can't quite understand, answer 200 questions about the Environment, and write a speech for debate. All assignments are due tomorrow. What that speech is about? Possibly about the art of procrastination.

Climbing further up one can see where the valley ends and the mountain begins. Notes, college applications, magazines, letters from friends, report cards, receipts, AP/SAT/ACT test scores, and possibly the course schedule I had to fill out two days ago, create this paper mountain. There is my computer, my dictionary, my collection of pencils and pens. Climbing further up, it gets a bit rocky. These are the many shapes and sizes of past or future textbooks. Ranging from colors to shapes and sizes, one can see the wear and tare of the journey these books have been through. At the peak, and the heart of my workspace, lies my memories. Pictures of friends, precious gifts from family, and of course, my most treasured item, my piggy bank, reside on the peak. I often look up to the peak of my desk to remind myself of the path I have taken, and the journey that is about to take place. The peak is, in fact, the most beautiful part of this mountain I call my desk.



OPHELIA

.....
By R.S. Reed

Glacial liquid seeps into shrinking lungs.
Organs weigh down to the river floor.
Purple lips and floating flowers are all the color
that remains.

.....
She lies, half above and
Half beneath; trapped in arctic purgatory.
Fingers stiff and eyes encrusted, staring straight
into God's light.

.....
Stringy brown hair surrounds a pallid oval face.
The putrid, filthy dress, once pure and white
floats half-heartedly,
Betrayed
And forgotten
Like its wearer at the altar



Spellbound
Recycled Paper
Rose Weinstein



Untitled
Digital Photography
Barbara Lamotne

Vicodin

By Alex Haimovich

Hydrocodone to call my own
Overdose religiously
No necrosis or unease to boast
A host of ills and ails
But no will to fail
Simple high with no low or any other way to go

Miniscule interactions radiate satisfaction
The little things, chemicals bonding, hugs and kisses
Pain receptors not responding
But certainly alive, vigilant for the stimulant
Disappointment prevails.

No-frills anti-chill, expensive thrills
That make you thrill and coo.
No fret? No sweat.
Acceptable warmth doesn't cause you to perspire
It radiates through you, penetrates you
Everyone should aspire to be lit ablaze by its mellow kinetics

Unfortunately habit forming, like anything else
However benign the disarray
Marry yourself to it and never be led astray
Feed the addiction for this friction that warms the soul and kills
the whole of despair
Pays the toll on the highway to hell, where all is well and everyone
lives to tell the tale

Perfect weather, whether or not you can weather the world
Bundle up or bare yourself to it, it doesn't matter
It's so nice where there's no ice
And where is that?
Below it all:
Under the influence.





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EDUCATING BROWARD SINCE 1960



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Literary & Arts Magazine
of Broward College
Volume 47 Issue 1 Fall Edition 2010*



P'AN KU

P'AN KU

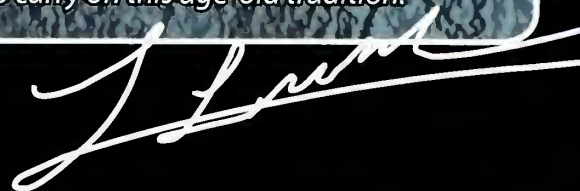
Volume 47

Issue 2

Editor's Note

According to a primitive Chinese myth, at the beginning of time, the universe had the shape of an egg. When the egg broke, a giant, P'an Ku was born. Along with the giant two basic elements emerged, both Yin and Yang. Yang formed the sky and Yin condensed to become the Earth. After 18,000 years P'an Ku died. P'an Ku's head created the Sun and the Moon. The rivers and seas came forth from his blood. His breath became the wind and from his voice became the thunder. Human beings were spawned from the fleas, which lived on him.

It was believed that the artistic mind had been infused with his creative power. Thus in his likeness, we try our best to express our selves in many forms of creativity. Our drive behind this issue is to bring back the simplistic understandings of art and creativity. This magazine has, since 1964, served the students of Broward College as a vehicle to get their work out into the world. We do a blind selection of work to make it as far as possible. As creative beings we strive to be heard and for our ideas to be understood. So we make this magazine for students, by students to carry on this age-old tradition.



P'an Ku, volume forty-seven, issue two, was designed, produced, and edited solely by students at Broward College. All contributions in this issue are by students at BC. This magazine is funded by Student Activities fees. The opinions expressed are those of our contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the editors, faculty, staff, administrators, or trustees of the college. Copyright 2011 by Broward College, 225 East Las Olas Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301. Contributions with a submission form which includes the name, address, student number, and telephone number of the contributor are welcome from all students attending BC. All communications with the editors and all inquiries concerning this publication should be addressed to: Editor of P'an Ku, BC South Campus, 7200 Pines Blvd., Pembroke Pines, FL 33024. Telephone: 954-201-8044. All copyrights revert back to the original artists and authors after publication.



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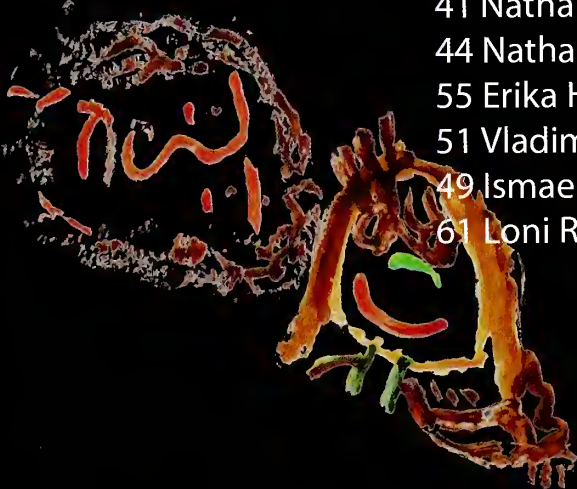
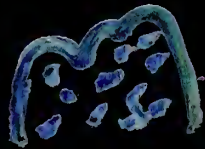
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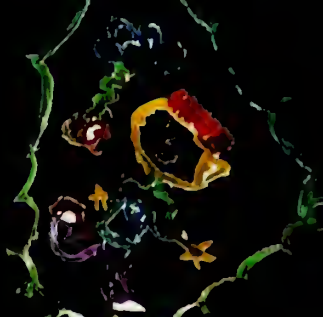

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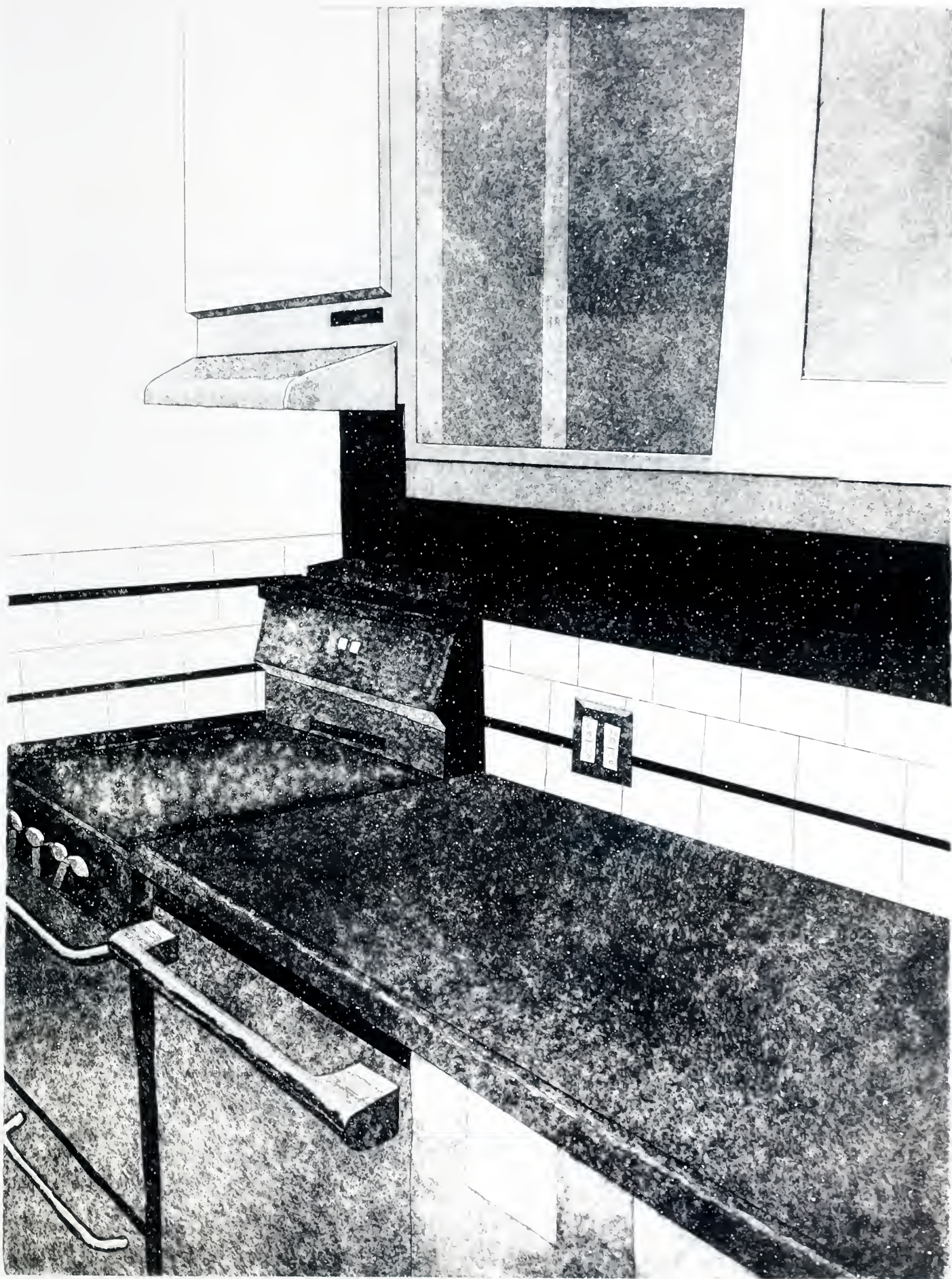
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Cocina
Etching on zinc
Phillip Karp

THE ALLURE OF HELL.

by Enrique Luis Hartmann-Arregui

This life outside combat has been rough. When I left the War, it was like crossing the luminous threshold and embracing the light at the end of the tunnel. Some of that light filled me up with warmth, security and love. The rest came as a solar flare, scorching me with pain, drug-induced sin, indecision and weirdness.

It has been over 3 years, and I yearn to return to combat. This desire is the same that drives a broken-hearted lover to morn for months. In combat I cannot sin, and I bask in absolution. There aren't any wrong decisions made and no temptation in that hell. There is only action. There is no need to think of the future, or to fear it or to prepare for it. In combat, you live from minute to minute. You don't have time to deal with fear. Fear becomes a victim of circumstance. Once it arrives, it is a split second decision to feel it or not. The devil and the angel on my shoulder, both dodging bullets, let me know when to duck and to keep on going.

Things have gotten better. I can daydream all I want in the cubicle of my corporate pirate ship. I am beginning to master my nightmares. Excess and party-popping those happy little derogative doses of what ever is closest, still manage to come as consequences of uncontrolled impulses. However, where I once found self-loathing and rebuke when I'd fall and fail, I now find hope. Love, which has been my tragic comedy of hit-or-miss, has reared her pretty little head. It's nothing like the adrenaline junkie romance I had when I first got back, but that means it won't hurt as much when it's over. Finally, my pockets aren't excessively empty as once before. I hate feeling like a pauper in the presence of my peers.

Fortune's smile does nothing to quiet my soldier's ardor. I long to ride a bulletproof steed through the bowels of hell. Give me my .50 Cal lance so I may pierce my enemies. It isn't bloodlust; I've no need for ear necklaces or tick marks on the butt stock of my rifle. I miss the do-or-die adrenaline surging through my body, yelling at my muscles and nerves with megaphones: "Go motherfucker go! Go faster damn you! Give me all that you have and more! I want it all!" I want to feel the burn in my throat as I inhale smoke, dust and gunpowder. The most I've ever felt alive is when I was the closest I've ever been to death.

I want to see how much stronger I've become. Can I do it again? Can I become the warrior I see in my daydreams? Leading, reassuring, confidant and most of all triumphant. To go means to eventually come back. Would I be able to avoid a second the plunge into destitution's pool of depression? Knowing what I know now, will I be able to avoid that disquieted state of mind?

I want to go back. I feel so unfulfilled. I feel insignificant. Safe and sound makes me feel stagnant and dumb-bound. Do I want to go back? To go back means leaving the goodness that I have found after searching through post-traumatic madness. Does staying safe means staying weak?

If I go back, I'll know what to expect. If I stay home, I'll have no way of knowing what's going to happen next. It is so much easier to fight a war than to live a life.

OVERCROWDING

by Steven Cochran II

Kyle Berry lay on a paper covered bed in a cramped white prison hospital room awaiting his release. The only things in his room are a stand for my instruments and a mirror on the wall. Down the hall, I am preparing myself in the pharmacy. It's Friday and I can't stop thinking about getting to my son's school and seeing his class perform their Christmas play.

Medical advances in all fields have eradicated almost every form of disease. With the inevitable increase in longevity, the world's population is exploding and mankind is now experiencing a shortage of resources. Farmers can't keep up with the demand for food and we now take new and untraditional measures to ensure that there is enough for everybody.

Yesterday we informed Kyle he was being released from prison. I will never know why he thinks he is getting out but I always like to try and guess. It's just something I do to pass the time. I'm sure he's spent a lot of time thinking about this day but I'll bet he never thought it would come. With the overcrowding in the prison system the way it is today, names are chosen carefully to adhere to strict guidelines. Lucky for him his name came up for review and was accepted, after that he comes and sees me.

I am finishing getting ready and humming "Dashing through the Snow" as Dr. Goodfellow walks in. He is a tall red headed man with a thick lumberjack beard that you don't normally see on professionals. "Are you prepared for the release in room 12, Dr. Grant?" He asks impatiently with his scruffy whiskers curling down his face. "It's about that time."

We haven't talked much since I got this job four months ago, but not many people here do. It's been a long week and more violent than usual, but it never bothers me much. "Yes sir, I'm ready, and by the way, the guard who came in this morning, he's going to be fine. He may not be able to see anymore but at least he's going to keep one eye." I answer back enthusiastically with a smile on my face.

"That's good to hear." He replies with an even stranger look on his face.

"Yeah, and the best news still is that we get to release someone today," I say a little too eagerly.

"Do you really think it's working?" Dr. Goodfellow asks. "I know the system is overcrowded but do you really think it is the right thing to do, to just release them and act like they were never here?"

I remember a time when there were heated debates over what to do to about the prison population and whether or not the death sentence was cruel and unusual punishment for prisoners or whether they should just let some people go. "Of course it is. What else are we supposed to do with them? I just wish we could release half of them all at once but that is not going to happen unless Congress starts permitting more. Just look at the piece of work we have today, he killed an entire family while they were on vacation."

Dr. Goodfellow sighs and taps his wristwatch impatiently so I pick up my tray and we walk out of the pharmacy together going our separate ways. I walk into the patient's room and ask him if he is ready with one of my toothy patented smiles. He replies he can't wait and I look at the two-way mirror on the wall and wink at Dr. Goodfellow, who I assume is on the other side, as I put my tray down

"Just relax sir and you will be out of here in no time." I reach for the needle and inject it into his arm. A couple of seconds later, I call the death at five o'clock on the dot.

I waste no time putting away my equipment and hurrying off to my son's school. When I pull into to the parking lot I immediately see my wife waiting for me out front with a relieved expression on her face.

"Hurry, dear." She yelled as I got closer. "It's about to start. You got here just in time."

I grabbed her hand and we turn to jog into the building together. "Whew, just made it." I breathily say.

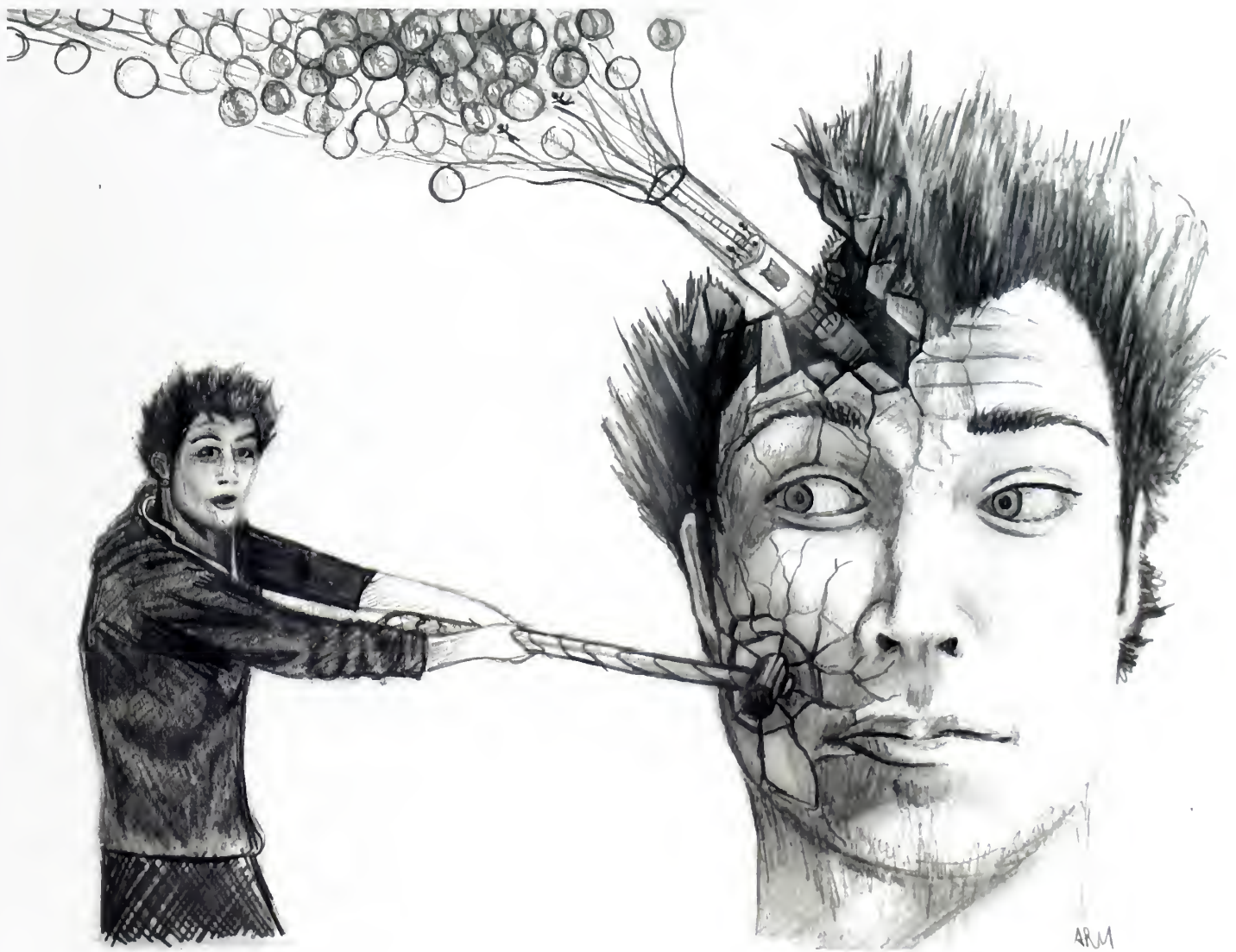
"How was your day?" She asked.

"Great."



Sunrise Yellowstone Lake

Photography
Ivar Fandel



Losing Dreams

Graphite

Aaron Mondock

BEAUTIFUL ROSE

by Taylor Lobo (Rogue Wolf)

Beautiful Rose

Born from the mix of

Seed, soil and water

Lady Sun using her love

To help you grow

Peaceful Young Rose

Beginning to bloom

Your beautiful face shows

And others watch your smile

Brighten the path

Blossoming Rose

You reach true beauty

Your thorns protecting you

From any harm that crosses

Your fragile path

Withering Rose

Your days come to end

But your beauty is saved

In a young seedling just made

For you to sire

Beautiful Rose

May you rest in peace

And join your Lady Sun

Helping your young to grow through

Light, warmth, and love

Talent

by Jeremy Cotto

The truly talented

The truly unique

Are the people that you don't see on TV

The woman sitting on the corner of the street

Banging dirty pots and pans

To make a unique beat

The homeless man on the subway floor

Playing his guitar for chump change

Enjoying the wealth from all the applause

The drugged up poet on the mic

Taking the troubles of his life

Turning it into sixteen addicting lines

The snapping applause getting him high

The painter not named Da Vinci

Whose art has a way

Of blowing minds

And taking breathes away

The aspiring dancer

Currently a waitress

Moving with unbelievable grace and flow

Creating the best choreography

That the world will never know

The painter, the poet, guitarist, dancer and drummer

More talented and deserving of praise

Than a Hilton, Housewife or someone from Jersey Shore

These are the people that we should adore



Hope and Freedom

Graphite and Compressed Charcoal
Sarah Greenberg

POETS CRY

by Annakie

It's cold here.

And with that,

those three syllables of simplicity

I feel no need to say more.

Simplicity is such a coveted luxury.

And yet so often overlooked.

What are we becoming? We are caught in sunset's haze,

Only a shadow of what we were meant to be,

And who dwell unknowingly in the darkness.

And so with companion pages and truthful pen,

I write because words confuse themselves on my lips

And tell half-truths of my heart.

Pen in hand, I release myself from heartache's prison,

Maintaining the silence.

They will never truly know me,

But will I ever truly know myself?



Idle
Charcoal
Laura Buitrago

A Watchman

by Ashley Wright

The pianist plays faster, maybe faster than he should, to portray through ivory keys, the sound of pounding hooves.

This horse rides in panic through the forest's dark hollows, because in the trail of this beast, a far worse one follows...

"The child, the child" the pursuer calls, all the while reaching for the neck so small.

"My father, my father" the man's son cries, a crown and train filling his eyes.

"My son, my son, there's nothing to see", the father denies reality.

A son warns his father that he sees this fiend tread, but by the time the father listens, the frightened child is dead.

The Erlking is a myth, at least that's how the German's feel, but any child ignored, the Erlking is real.



Imma
Photography
Levi Lunon

My Familiar Stranger

(A Poem for Robert Frost)

by Annakie

We became acquaintances unexpectedly and he knew me.
Knew the winter that my life was,
And the jolts of depression that bore salty tears each evening
And when we spoke, heart heard his song,
Understood his song
Sang his song.

With stanzas and rhymes he called my name
And with words he calmed my heart
Strange how even with separation I managed to link our realities
So even years apart, miles apart
Times apart
He befriended me
And serenaded me.

Both misunderstood severely
We were always
one
and
The same.

Only, he departed this life some time ago.
Long before I came.
Perhaps one day we will take the road not taken
And lay sharing stories under birches.



Mattman's Suicide Pose

Acrylic Paint

Jose A. Sary

Have Hope

by Enrique Luis Hartmann-Arregui

You wake up in your own sweat,
You were dreaming you died,
But your not dead yet.
You have a life to live,
You carry the P.T.S.D. cross of a combat vet.

You're not the only my brother.
You don't have to suffer alone.
Reach out and I'll grab you,
Don't feel guilty because you made it home.

It's the 4th of July,
The rocket's red glare has you in tears,
The child in your arms says, "Mommy I missed you"
And you miss your friend who you've known for years.

You're not the only one my sister,
You don't have to walk this road alone,
Take my hand, I'll show you the way.
Rejoice beautiful mother! Your child is happy you're home.

The door's locked and the curtains closed,
Your true love stopped returning your calls.
5 pills downed and a bottle in your hand,
The pain is over whelming, you feel no one understands.
You go for the orange box cutter in the garage,
But the Release promised by Death is only a mirage.

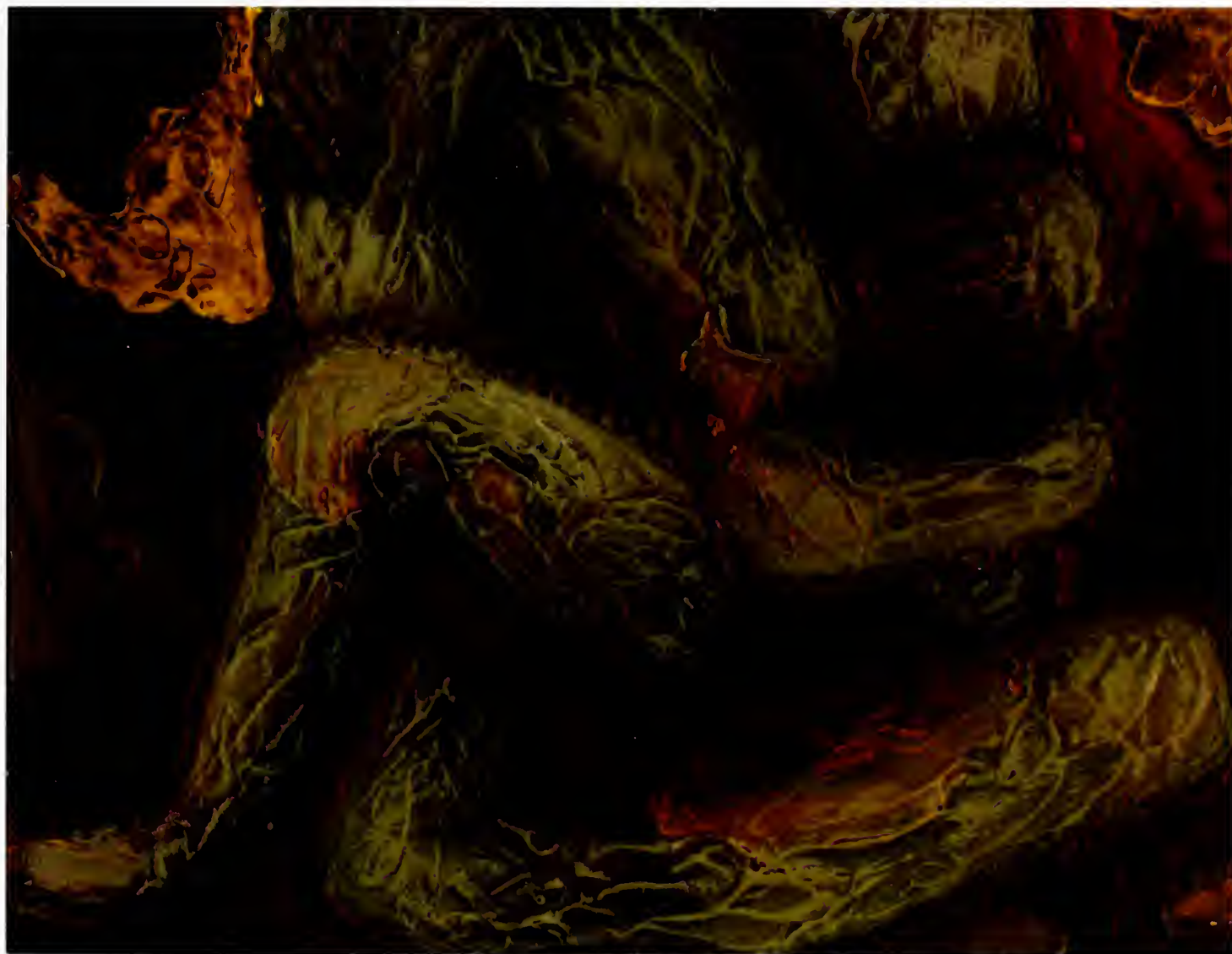
You must face your demons.
I'll show you where to start.
Resolution lies not with slitting your wrists,
It's in being patient with yourself and healing your heart.



Which Path?

Photography

Salomon O. Carrasco



In Your Arms
Acrylic & Oil
Lorraine Boucicaut

THE FILLED G A P

by Eduardo Rodriguez

It is me and my only friend, Scout, walking a couple feet in front of me on the hunt for any oblivious target. His tail is wagging from side to side in excitement, as every tiny noise around him makes his ears perk up. He has glorious, golden hair encompassing his whole figure, reaching halfway towards the floor; the muscles in his legs are exceptionally toned and fit and his figure is similar to that of an alpha-wolf of a pack.

We are walking along a dirt path filled with dead, discolored leaves, broken tree limbs, branches, and an overly condensed canopy of oak trees swaying through the wind above us. I notice a small patch of shrubbery a few yards to the left; where there came a distinct noise, and the bushes invaded with pea-sized red berries begin to shake. Of course, just a few seconds later, a sandy colored rabbit came dashing out.

In an instant, Scout leapt into action, his hind legs kicking up dirt behind him. His prey was very intelligent to head towards the trees, but not enough to realize the vast opening of low grass was only to be followed by a large grey mountain wall.

After Scout weaved in and out of the traffic formed by the tree trunks, there were only about ten yards in between him and his victim in the sea of green grass. Scout could nearly taste the blood upon his taste buds as they were halfway towards the mountain wall. Only a few yards behind the rabbit, Scout pushed all his weight against his hind legs like an uncoiling spring as he pounced in the air, engulfed in pure excitement as droplets of saliva shot out of his mouth.

He fell upon his victim to break its neck with his jaw enclosing upon it. The bones popping and cracking like twigs, with a slight stream of red dye trickling down the sandy brown coat of fur and dripping to the floor below. Scout's razor sharp fangs a now pink color.

The sun is setting now, the sky a fiery orange as we arrive to the end of our destination where the dirt path ends at a small cabin we call home. This cabin and all his fortunes inherited to me before my no good father passed away, him being a very wealthy businessman. My home consists of a kitchen, a small living room area, and one master bedroom. The whole interior of the cabin is filled with a scattered assortment of my own works of art pinned

all over the walls and a mess of unfinished paintings crowding the floor.

I took pride in my creations, which are not created for the public, but rather for my own self satisfaction and sanity. For I haven't seen another human being in nearly eight years, and I feel that all I need in this world to remain sane is Scout, nature, and my art. My works of art mainly focus on the environment in which I live in. My most recent painting is hanging above the fireplace in the living room, depicting the sunrise I witnessed a couple days ago. The painting consists of the combination of orange and purple hues in the sky, with the vibrant red color of the sun rising above the miniature green and grey mountain tops.

After feasting upon my hunted rabbit, I retreat back to my bedroom. Scout already being fast asleep on the floor by the fireplace, finding some space in between the mess of unfinished paintings on the floor. My bedroom has this sense of loneliness with only the sounds of the world outside. I fall heavily upon my bed being so tired after the meal and the effort put into it.

I lay in my bed with my own thoughts flooding my brain and no one to share them with. I was feeling this sense of emptiness these past couple of weeks I have never felt before. Lately I felt as if I needed some other sort of entity, or being to make my life complete. However, I do not believe in love at all, or at least not with another living person. The only example of "so-called" love, were the examples demonstrated by my horrible experiences with my mother and father that have haunted me whole life. My mother lying helplessly on a white tile floor with a sea of blood gushing from her skull, shards of glass from a vodka bottle protruding from her head. While my father stood over her with blood-stained hands, not showing any sense of sympathy. He only had this stupid smirk on his face as he downed another shot of vodka.

Another childhood memory was released from its holding cell in my mind; one of the many drunken rages I have witnessed from my father. The horrible image of my father throwing punch after punch to my mother's face until she could no longer breathe came rolling back. Her swollen black and purple eyes staring at the ceiling after her head slammed to the tile floor with such force that led to her death.

"Momma! Momma!"

I spring to my feet, and sit on the side of the bed. My heart is racing and my breathing becomes very rapid and heavy. I bury my face in my hands as tears start rolling down. If I ever do fall upon love, I will never lay a single hand on her. I hated my father and would be nothing like him. I will love whoever this woman may be with the same amount of love I have for nature and my paintings.

I awake the next morning, not remembering when exactly I fell asleep due to the torment I experienced the night before. Then there is this knocking on the front door. This is quite peculiar, because the closest person to my home is maybe about 10 miles away, and there is only one abandoned road that leads to my cabin in the middle of the woods, at an elevation of maybe two thousand feet. My cabin resting on the outskirts of a suburban town, which I did not recall the name of it, for I haven't been in that area for quite a while. I find myself very comfortable in the wooded area I am confined in. I finally make up my mind and decide to head towards the front door as I am very hesitant to welcome this intruder. To my surprise, Scout is already there staring at the doorknob.

"Scout! Away," and he darts away.

"Who is this?" as I inch the door open, not being able to see whoever is behind it.

"I am very sorry, sir. I didn't mean to intrude. I seemed to have lost my way and need help with directions. I am trying to find a town, Clearwater," came a soothing, feminine voice.

"Err, um . . . Clearwater? My apologies I cannot help you. You will have to go somewhere else for directions," I muttered, taken aback from the voice.

"I have tried, but there seems to be nobody else present in this area. Please, I am begging you. I am running very late. I need to get to a wedding very soon,"

To my surprise, I seem to give in to her begging. I swing the door open to see this gorgeous woman maybe in her late twenties, wearing a light blue dress just above her knees. The sun is shining on her dark brown hair and her sky blue eyes are blinding my vision as they twinkle in the sunlight. My heart sinks and I feel this strange sensation in my chest I have never experienced before. I could feel this very warm, pleasant feeling throughout my body. I just stood there awkwardly for a moment staring at the floor in fear of making any eye contact with her.

"Would you let me in?" she said smiling.

"Oh yes, yes. Do come in," as I shut the door behind her, nearly tripping over her feet.

"Oh I am very, very sorry. I didn't mean to."

"It is really okay. Do not worry about it," she said giggling.

"Why what a mess you got here. What fascinating paintings. Are these by you?" as she stood gazing around my living area in complete awe.

"Oh they are nothing. Yes, yes," talking to my feet.

"Don't be so humble. They are very lovely, especially that one over there," I look to where she is pointing to see my most recent painting depicting the sunrise that was placed above the fireplace.

"Yes that is very good. My most recent," still avoiding her eyes as I am speaking.

"So do you have a map, or some sort of directory?"

"Map? No, I use the path as a guide," pertaining to the dirt road I follow in search for food, water, and supplies.

"Excuse me? You are quite different. What is your name? I'm Angela," putting her hand out in front of me.

"Thomas," my hand shakes nervously as I reach out to grab her hand, feeling the warm, very soft skin as we lock hands.

I finally raise my head to meet with her eyes, and notice she is looking at me wide-eyed with her teeth glimmering in the sunlight. We locked eyes for what seemed to be an eternity, time dwindling away, as her appointment for the wedding seeming to be of no real importance anymore.

In that same instance, a ray of sunlight came slipping through the blinds to our left. Outside, the sun was rising above the trees that once covered its light. This little ray of light enveloped only the two of us like a stage light, bringing us both together with only the mere presence of nearly microscopic, sparkling dust particles dancing all around us. From that moment, I knew that this was what I have been longing for; and I will sacrifice all of my heart for this angel, treat her perfectly, and not follow the footsteps of my father. This being standing before me would fill the void in my life with my other true love, nature, being my witness.



Elizabeth's Bathory

Acrylic Paint

Brittany Camacho

Mary's Death

by Brittany Camacho

One Sunday morning 5-year-old Gracie wakes up to find her goldfish, Mary, floating at the top of her tank. Upset by her pet's death, she searches the house to find her mother asleep on the couch again.

"Mommy?"

"Hmmm, Gracie? What is it honey? Why are you crying?"

"Mary died."

"Aw honey, come lay here with mommy. I know you loved her a lot, but Mary's in a better place now. Remember how she wasn't the same color and barely swimming around for the last few days?"

"Mm hmm."

"Well now she's in fishy heaven and she's as happy and healthy as she was when you brought her home."

"Really?"

"Yep! And she would want you to remember her the way she was before she got sick. And when you're ready we can ask Daddy to get you a new goldfish."

"But I don't want a new fish, I want Mary back."

"I know honey, but dying is a part of life. Everyone dies one day. But they live on in our hearts. And you'll miss her a lot, but the memories you shared will last forever. No matter what happens, even if you get a new goldfish, always remember that she loved you very much. Mary will still be your first pet and she'll watch over you from fishy heaven."

"She will?"

"Of course she will."

"I love you mommy."

"I love you too Gracie."

(They hug)

"Mommy?"

"Yea honey?"

"Can we have a funeral for Mary?"

"Sure honey. That's a wonderful idea. Why don't you go pick some pretty flowers from the garden, and meet me in the bathroom, okay?"

"Okay!"--

"Are you ready?"

"Mm hmm."

"We are gathered here today, to honor Mary the goldfish. She was a very beautiful fish and a strong swimmer. Would you like to say a few words Gracie?"

"Mm hmm. I loved Mary. She was the best goldfish ever. And even when I get a new goldfish, I'll still love her most."

"That was lovely honey. You can flush now if you're ready."

(Gracie pauses a moment and then pushes down the handle and looks up at her mom)

"Gracie honey, mommy's very tired. Would you like to go lay down with me on the couch?"

"Okay."

"You know mommy has been sick lately right?"

"Mm hmm."

(Gracie begins to cry)

"Well, when I go to mommy heaven I will watch over you just like Mary."

"But I don't want you to die!"

"I love you Gracie, and I will always be your mommy. Even if you can't see me anymore..."

"Mommy! Don't go to sleep!"

"...I'm sorry honey, mommy's just so tired..."

Demons

by Taylor Lobo (Rogue Wolf)

Dear Goddess
Let me see those demons
The ones who chose
To betray my trust
Let the light shine upon them.

Most noble Goddess
Let me have the strength
To stand tall
Amongst those foul creatures
And not show fear.

Beautiful Goddess
Let me be able to fight
Those wretched fiends
And become victorious
Let my demons be gone.



Blood Shot
Maya, Photoshop, ZBrush
Irving Trujillo

October 19.

by Stephanie Cantave

To him today is just another day, it is Friday and he is driving me to school.

Mom stayed home, she "does not feel well"

But I know the truth; today will be dreadful.

I want to tell him, I should tell him.

After an average day at work, he is going home to an empty house.

"Mom is leaving you and she is taking us with her.

By now the U-Haul truck is probably already on its way.

She will grab everything we own, even the TV you bought two weeks ago."

Suddenly he seems to notice my placid face.

I catch him staring at me in the mirror, troubled and nervous.

For a second, I have this horrible feeling that he knows.

But, "Something's wrong" he only asks.

I shake my head and look away.

He looks vulnerable, miserable even; maybe it's all in my head.

The thought of not seeing him every day is grueling, cruel, agonizing.

The car stops and he looks at me again, tortured eyes refraining a million questions.

I wish I could stay with him forever, here, in his blue Nissan Sentra , tell him how much I love him.

Instead, "Have a nice day", I indistinctly mumble as I walk away.

Tears running down my face, but I don't look back.

This secret is not mine to share.



By The Skin...
Ceramics
Diane Karmiol

DEATH OF AN INNOCENT

(Grendel's last thoughts)

by Larissa Cantave

When I am gone
I won't be missed
Instead they will feast
Upon their strong, intoxicating liquors
Dozens of roasted, savory, wild pork,
And each other's wives, daughters and sisters.
Yet, they called me the animal,
The demon, the devil.
They blamed me, hated me, cursed my name
For being a plague on their lands
When among them, they kill, steal, rape,
And in their gods they have lost faith.
I spit on their names
And the graves of those I have,
With or without remorse, brutally,
Satisfyingly, beheaded by my long claws and sharp jaws.
They never gave me a chance.
Their stupid, stubborn minds too weak to see,
Underneath all my bearlike, grotesque appearance,
Lies a heart no different from theirs,
An intelligent mind capable of choosing right or wrong.
Still they feared me, chased me with fire and stones
Until I found myself retreated in mother's caves
Like a dog in a cage, Lonely.
She warned me of their nature,
Still I tried to be like them
And show them I was no devil, only curious.
But now I lay in her thick, crippled hands
My blood running down her large, naked breasts,
Her tears crashing against my scalp,
Humming a sweet lullaby to my ear,
Tightening my body to hers in the cold, dark caves
Where the one they call Beowulf had come to kill me
Where I was born as simple as innocent
Where I will die with all the evil of this world
And no one will grieve
Instead, they will feast.

Featured Artist

Megan Broccoli



The Kitchen
Photography

Featured Artist: Megan Broccoli



Infernal Combustion
Photography (Diptych)





Music Inn
Photography

ments. Just look up



Three Kids
Photography

A Virtuous Choice

by Natalie B. Kline

Sitting on her bed, Candice stared at the stick, as the second line was beginning to form. She could not believe what she was seeing. Staring at the stick, her eyes played tricks on her, the two lines blurred together into one. Adding the stick with the others, she saw that a pile was forming and considered taking another but knew that the eleventh test would have the same result. Candice was pregnant at eighteen, like a bad reality TV show.

Fidgeting with the gold band on her ring finger, her thoughts strayed to her father's reaction. On her sixteenth birthday she pledged to the man in her life, her father, that she would stay pure until her wedding night. Looking at her ring, she knew she betrayed him and her family. Her friends would likely abandon her in shame if they knew of her weakness. Her thoughts wandered to her new future, a college dropout and raising child on her own. Bile rose in her stomach, she ran to the trash basket and regurgitated her breakfast. Unsure if it was morning sickness or thoughts of her imminent future that made her sick. There was always the option of giving the baby up for adoption but that would still mean admitting her failure to her parents. She hated the thing inside of her that was ruining her life. There was one option she had but it went against everything she believed in. Her parents, friends, pastor would condemn her with any choice she made. Grabbing the phone, she dialed the number knowing it was the only choice she had. After two rings, someone answered the phone.

"Women's Choice Health Center. How may I help you?"

"Hi. Um, I need to make an appointment. I'm..." She couldn't finish the sentence, instead began to cry.

"Are you pregnant?" The person on the other end asked.

"Yes," Candice sniffed. "I need to get rid of it."

"When was the last day of your last period?" The person asked.

"About two and half months ago. I think," she answered.

"We have an appointment available for Friday at eleven. Does that work for you?" the person asked.

"No!" She shouted. Lowering her voice Candice said, "Do you have anything sooner?"

"Thursday at eight."

"Great eight o'clock. I'll be there," Candice said. "How much is it?" She asked, worried that she couldn't afford the procedure.

"That depends on how far along you are. If the abortion pill is an available option, it will be two hundred and ninety dollars. If you're between ten to fourteen weeks, you'll need to do an in-clinic abortion. That would be three hundred and forty dollars. If you choose to be sedated that's an additional fifty dollars and you'll need to bring someone with you."

"Oh," Candice said, thinking that the procedure cost more than she had in her bank account. "I'll be there."

Sitting on her bed, she looked around her dorm room trying to figure out where she would get the money to cover the procedure. She refused to think the word abortion much less say it out loud. Her bank account held a hundred and fifty dollars from her part-time job at the HOPE center. She didn't own many things of value. Her three year old iPod probably wasn't worth much. The small television that only worked after shaking it a few times, might get her a few bucks. The only item in her possession of any worth was her MacBook. Her father gave it to her the week before she went to college. He wanted to make sure she had the best computer to help her in her studies. Tears welled in her eyes as she thought of what her father would say if she told him that the computer was stolen.

Candice heard the lock of her dorm room turn and her roommate outside the door talking to someone. Frantic, she grabbed the pregnancy tests and threw them in her dresser drawer. Grabbing tissue from her nightstand, she quickly wiped her eyes, adjusted her clothing and smoothed her hair as her roommate, Parker, walked in the room holding a Starbucks cup in one hand and her cell phone in the other. She was talking loudly and acknowledged her roommate with a head nod.

The conversation on one end was composed mainly of one word sentences. "Yeah. Tonight. A-huh. Not sure. The skirt. No.

The short one." An odor permeated the room like day old eggs and rotting garbage, Parker looked around for the culprit and noticed her Candice's red-rimmed eyes. "Hey, I have to go. Yeah, later." She put down her phone, turned to Candice and said, "What is that smell?"

"Sorry. I got sick," Candice said grabbing the wastebasket and placing it in the hall.

"Is that why you're not at your suck meeting?"

Normally Candice would correct Parker, and explain in detail the social and moral need for S.S.U.C – Students Saving Unborn Children but instead she shrugged and said, "I wasn't feeling up to it."

"Are you all right?" Parker asked. Candice's indifferent response was unusual.

Nodding her head in response, Candice avoided her roommate's gaze, examining the web like crack in the wall. Her face turned a deep shade of pink, humiliated by the knowledge of being judged negatively by her roommate. Tears streamed down her face, her hands attempting to wipe away the evidence. Parker walked up behind her and said, "Should I call one of your friends?"

"No." was the only thing Candice was able to utter before completely breaking down in uncontrollable sobs.

The roommates weren't particular friends however Candice felt Parker hesitated before placing her hands on Candice's shoulders. Parker said, "I'm here if you want to talk about it."

With no one to go to with her problem, Candice knew that Parker was probably the only person that might help her. In between the sobs, Candice mumbled "I'm pregnant."

Parker stood there frozen. Candice was sure she knew what Parker was thinking; the secretary of Waiting for the One and an active member of S.S.U.C. could not be pregnant. She wanted to laugh at the absurdity but held it back.

"You probably think I'm a fraud," Candice said.

"I'm not sure what to think. Are you sure?"

Candice walked to her dresser, opened the drawer and withdrew the pregnancy tests. She threw them on the bed. "Unless all ten are defective, I'm pregnant."

Parker picked one up and looked at the two bright pink lines. "How? What I mean is... I thought you were a virgin. You don't believe in premarital sex," she said probably remembering the lecture Candice gave her on a woman's virtue after she walked

in on Parker and an overnight guest.

"I still don't. Um... I ah went to an Omega Beta party at the beginning of the semester," Candice said inspecting the floor.

"You went to a Frat party," Parker said with disbelief.

"I was with Waiting for the One," Candice snapped. "We were passing out student club brochures."

"So you got knocked up passing out abstinence brochures," Parker interrupted and instantly regretted it. "I'm sorry. Go on," she said softly.

"Then this guy offered me some punch. He was nice he seemed genuinely interested in what I had to say. We danced, I think. I don't remember much." She took a deep breath. "The next morning I woke up in his room."

"You drank jungle juice. Do you know how much alcohol is in that?" Parker asked. "Have you seen a doctor?"

"No. I have an appointment on Thursday morning at Women's Choice Health Center."

"You're going to get tested?"

"Huh. No. Um... I'm... Oh God..I'm getting rid of it."

Surprised showed on Parker's face for the second time.

"I can't have it. My parents..." her voice trailed.

"I understand."

"It cost three hundred and ninety dollars. I have a hundred and fifty. I'm going to sell my lap top for the rest."

"Don't. You need that. I'll lend you the rest. You can pay me back when you get it. I know where you live," she said.

Candice smiled. "Thank you," she said. "Can you... would you mind... ah... Can you come with me?"

"Of course" Parker replied.

The next few days passed excruciatingly slow, Candice thought she would never make it to Thursday. On Thursday morning, before the sun was up, Candice was showered and dressed in her nicest skirt and buttoned up white shirt. She put on her grandmother pearls, for luck she thought. By the time Parker woke up she was sitting at her desk waiting her legs moving up and down in a rapid motion as if riding a bicycle, a nervous tick she developed in her youth.

When they arrived at the clinic Candice hesitated at the door recalling the numerous times she shouted at women entering the clinic about to murder their babies. Now she was walking towards her own baby's death and rather than feel guilt all she could think was how she just wanted to get over it. Trembling, she reached to open the door but Parker got to it first and gestured for her to walk in.

Inside, the clinic looked different than she imagined. It was painted in a warm beige color that reminded her of sand, plants and pictures of landscapes offered the only décor. Brown vinyl chairs lined the walls, two coffee tables with magazines scattered over them were at the center of the waiting room. Opposite the door was a counter with a Plexiglas window, a gap at the bottom of the window indicated that you can communicate to the woman in scrubs behind the counter. It reminded her of the jail she visited in Loxahatchee with her church youth group. On the counter was a clip board with a sign in sheet. As Candice walked towards the counter, the woman behind the window looked up.

"Hello," Candice whispered barely audible through the plastic barrier, "I have an appointment."

Parker spoke up for her. "Hello," she said clearly. "My friend here has an eight o'clock appointment."

The woman in the pink scrubs looked at the appointment book and asked, "Candice Martin?"

She wanted to say yes but nothing came out of my mouth. Parker replied for her instead. The woman asked Candice to fill out the paper work and told her that someone would be with her shortly. Parker grabbed the clipboard and guided her to a vinyl chair in the corner. When they sat down Parker handed Candice the clip board with attached pen. Candice looked at the forms. The first part was basic information: name, address, phone, and emergency contact. The last one caused Candice to panic; she couldn't give her parents information as an emergency contact. They would disown her if they ever found out. Before she could voice her fear out loud Parker leaned over and whispered her phone number. Breathing out a sigh of relief Candice smiled at her. She then read the other questions: When was her last period? Last gynecological exam? Allergies? Medications?

As she filled out the forms two other women walked in, one alone and another accompanied by her boyfriend. In the past, Candice would have judged them for entering this building; today she felt a kinship with these women. Not exactly knowing why they were here, she felt closer to them than any of the women in her life.

A few minutes later a short, grey haired woman wearing

pink scrubs opened the door and called out her name. She looked at Parker, who stood to join her but the woman said "I'm sorry; your friend can't come back here with you."

She turned to look at Parker. "Don't worry I'll be out here waiting for you," Parker said reassuringly. She walked through a hall painted the same color as the waiting room and into a small blue room, the size of her parent's walk-in closet back home, there was a table and two chairs. Posters about H.I.V. and other S.T.D.'s decorated the walls. Candice sat down and the woman in the scrubs sat down with her.

"My name is Marlene. I have to ask you a few questions and then we'll do some tests," she said with a smile.

Too petrified to speak, Candice only nodded. Marlene looked over Candice's paper work. "When was your last visit to a gynecologist?"

"I've never been to one."

Marlene nodded and Candice thought she answered wrong. "When was your last day of your last period?"

"I'm not sure. Over two months ago. I never kept track of it before."

Marlene nodded and continued with questions. When did she take the pregnancy test? What method of birth control did she use? How many sexual partners did she have?

After a few more questions, Candice blurted out, "I only had sex once. God punished me. Now I'm pregnant."

Marlene just nodded and continued with her questions. After what seemed like hours of questioning, Candice was asked if she knew all her options.

"I just want to get rid of it and get out of here," Candice said.

"All right then," Marlene said and then passed her some forms. She explained that Candice needed to read everything carefully and then sign the last page. The forms were full of information of what she was to expect, from blood work to the actual procedure. Reading page after page, pressure began to build in her chest. Overwhelmed, rotating her ring on her finger, tears streamed down her face like rain flowing down a window pane. Marlene placed her hand over Candice's and sat there in silence with her.

"Are you sure you want to do this, honey?" Marlene asked.

"Yes."

"Well then take your time dear."

Another minute passed and Candice signed the form. Marlene stood up and asked Candice to follow her. Room after room, test after test, they were finally ready to do the ultrasound.

Laying on the table, her skirt and underpants folded on the chair to her right, she waited for the doctor to come in. There was a knock on the door, it opened and the doctor along with the sympathetic Marlene walked in.

"Hello, Candice. I'm Dr. Chen," she said holding a file. She recognized the doctor from one the protests. There was nothing out of the ordinary about her, except that she wore red converse with her lab coat and dress pants. "I'll be doing a vaginal ultrasound to confirm the length of pregnancy."

Candice nodded her head in understanding. Marlene turned on a machine then rolled it over.

"It will be cold and you'll be uncomfortable for a few minutes," Dr. Chen said. With her eyes closed, Candice nodded again, hoping to speed along the process. She felt something cold press against her, violating her as it moved around inside her. Was this the penalty for her betrayal? She thought.

"You're about ten weeks. Do you want to see the ultrasound?"

Opening her eyes, focusing on Dr. Chen's red converse sneakers, she thought what it would be like to see it. Through her work at HOPE and S.S.U.C. she had seen plenty of pictures of aborted babies but she wondered if seeing her own unborn baby would be different. Before she could put more thought in to it, she blurted out "Yes." Doctor Chen turned the machine around and showed Candice the image on the machine. The screen of the machine was like her small television in her dorm room, full of static. It reminded her of the Rorschach test she saw in her psychology book.

"It looks like a kidney bean," Candice said, astonished because the image looked nothing like the pictures she held up in front of the clinic in her years of protest. Years of training, the doctor knew better than to respond instead she explained that Candice was too far along for the medical abortion and had to do an in-clinic abortion. After Candice was dressed Dr. Chen returned alone and proceeded to go over her medical history again. Candice thought that this was all repetitive. Weary, she was tired of talking about the procedure and was eager to get it over with.

As Dr. Chen talked, Candice imagined telling the father of the baby about her pregnancy. Hi, you took my virginity and now I'm pregnant. She laughed out loud at the thought. Dr. Chen stopped talking and looked at her.

"I'm sorry. I'm nervous," Candice said rapidly.

Dr. Chen then proceeded to explain about the sedation. She will feel relaxed but would not be able to drive home.

"My roommate drove me," Candice said and signed more forms.

Finally Marlene returned and gave her some pills. Two were for pain, one was to dilate her cervix and the other was an antibiotic to prevent any infections she explained and walked out. She then undressed and waited for them to return. Feeling

numb, Candice realized the pain medication was taking effect. For the first time in days she relaxed, her mind began to wander examining her life the last couple of days. She thought of her parents but didn't feel guilt just relief that they had no idea what was happening. Her thoughts drifted to her friends and how she couldn't turn to them when she needed them most. But Parker was there for her without

question even after months of Candice's judgmental remarks.

Dr. Chen and Marlene walked in to the room and began explaining the procedure, Candice heard only words. Candice heard the humming of a machine. She drifted into a dream. Sandra, a member of S.S.U.C., was yelling at her to hurry up, they had to stop the murderers. She heard someone vacuum and asked them to stop because she was studying for a test. Members of S.S.U.C. surrounded her and told her she'll get the death penalty for failing the test.

Candice awoke in a reclining chair, in another beige room. She looked around and there were other women around in reclining chairs. To her right, sat Parker, she gave her a sleepy smile.

"Wow. That stuff knocked you out. They said most people stay awake but are drowsy."

"You're up. Good," Marlene said as she walked into the room. "Here are instructions on what you need to do over the next couple of days and information on what to expect. You need to schedule a follow up visit for next week."

"I'll take care of that," Parker said and walked over to the reception area.

*She cried again.
Candice shed more tears
in the last few days than
she had over the last
eighteen years.*

"You have a good friend, Candice. When your friend comes back you can leave."

"Thank you," was all Candice was able to say.

When Parker returned she helped Candice up, out of the clinic and into the car. In their dorm room Parker walked Candice to her bed and covered her in a quilt.

"When you were in there I went and got you soup. I wasn't sure what you liked so I brought you one of everything. I also got you Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia."

"How did you. . ."

"I've seen you eat it. I figured you might want some comfort food," Parker said

"Thank you."

"What are roomies for?"

"Thank you," she said again knowing she couldn't express her gratitude eloquently.

"How do you feel?" Parker asked.

"Crappy. Cramps. I want the day to be over." She cried again. Candice shed more tears in the last few days than she had over the last eighteen years.

"Are you in pain? Do you need some Advil?"

"No. I'm okay. I just. . ."

"What?"

"I just feel guilty."

"That's okay. Many women feel that way. . ."

"No. You don't understand. I don't feel guilty about the abortion. I feel guilty because I don't." She couldn't believe that she said the word out loud.

"Okay. . ." Parker said.

"I should feel guilty. I should feel something. . . but I don't."

"It's okay. Whatever you're feeling is okay." Parker said tucking the quilt all around her.

The day continued with Parker comforting Candice with soup, pizza and ice cream. "Candice?" Parker asked as they were lying on their beds.

"Hmm," murmured Candice sleepily.

"Who's Andrew?"

"Why?" asked Candice now alert.

"You kept saying his name when you were in the recovery room."

"Just someone I knew," Candice said and rolled over to go to sleep.

The next morning Candice woke up feeling like the weight finally lifted from her chest. She looked at her new friend sleeping across the room and was thankful that the housing office placed them together. A knock on the door woke Parker, Candice was about to get up to answer the door but Parker told to stay and rest. Parker walked across the room and asked who was at the door.

"It's Sandra. Candice's friend."

When the door opened, Sandra strolled in refusing to acknowledge Parker; she walked straight to Candice's bed.

"You're not ready. We're supposed to be there by ten. It's nine-thirty."

Candice stared at Sandra, bewildered at Sandra's statement and then it came to her.

"I'm not feeling well, Sandra. I don't think I can go."

"You have to. Get ready. I'll wait. Hurry."

Afraid to argue and raise Sandra's suspicion, Candice felt like she had no options, got up and walked to her closet. She felt Parker's stare, ashamed she was unable to look at her roommate. Instead she walked across the hall to the bathroom. Looking in the mirror she didn't recognize the reflection staring back at her. She dressed quickly. Back at the room, she told Sandra she was ready and ignored Parker as they left.

Once they arrived at their destination, Sandra popped the trunk of her car and handed Candice poster board. They walked across a street and joined other student on a sidewalk across a building. People walked in front of them towards the building, Sandra yelled "Now." The group began to scream accusations to the people passing them. A woman in pink scrubs with her back facing the students crossed the street towards the building; Candice waved her sign and shouted, "baby killer". As the woman turned around and looked at Candice, she recognized the sympathetic Marlene who comforted her yesterday.



Blindness
Glass & Clay
Nathalie Alfonso

Yo No Se Mañana

by Alli Sattari

I don't know tomorrow,
nor do I remember yesterday
Even today keeps slipping away
I only know this moment, and this moment
In this moment, I write
Because this moment might,
Be the moment. . .
I'd give you the world, but I don't own it
I don't know tomorrow, we never met
Yesterday is only an old friend
I know now and never
Because now will never be again.

You Put the Stars in My Night Sky

by Stefanie Landers

Like the imprint of a foot in the sand,
I recall it, just like it was yesterday,
I remember it, this face I hold so dear to me,
those eyes that stare, burned into my memory,
like the embers of a dying fire, licking at my skin.
Sweat pours off my flesh like rain onto the streets,
love isn't a game when you play for keeps,
it's something everyone needs and perceives as, life.
Some breathe but do not live, others hate, some forgive,
we my dear, are the here and now, and nothing else matters,
nothing else can touch us.
How it happened, I'll never forget-there we were,
lying in my bed, wrapped up in each other like the sheets surrounding us,
ensnared, without a care to the world around us.
My head was on your shoulder, your arms around my waist,

I was still drunk, not on booze but on your taste,
like vanilla ice cream, sweet and smooth against my lips.
Each kiss, each touch, I was flying high,
your laughter my wings, the ceiling of my bedroom sky.
Your chocolate eyes, bright in the lamp light,
locked me in and held me there, unable to look away,
unable to break your stare, like iron shackles binding my wrists.
Willing prisoner of this moment, never wanting it to end,
your stare digging deep into my soul, reading the words you found within.
In that moment, you spoke of love,
piercing my heart with each kiss,
pushing me headfirst into paradise,
and in that instant, all was bliss.
Just like that, the pain ended, just like that,
the hurt mended, and I-we,
haven't looked back ever since.



Reborn

Clay

Nathalie Alfonso

(front)



(back)

5 SECOND

THOUGHT

by Enrique Luis Hartmann-Arregui

The bullets fly looking for me,
Whizzing by with whistling piercing hate.
I hide in a field of date palms.
I reload my magazine while staring into an Islamic sunset.

A day ends, a night begins.
Orion find's me crouched and war painted with my friends.
Waiting for the enemy to take the bait.
Doing the job my uncle gave me.

I'm tempted to spare more than a thought for you.
If I dwell too much I'm dead.
I have to stave off the fatigue.
Can't be complacent if I wanna see the next day.

Lord take me out of this desert,
And back to my concrete jungle,
Where the only things I have to look out for,
Are crack heads, two faced women and old people driving.

Mi Green Caad

A story in Jamaican patois

by Shannon Copeland

Dear Mr. Wellington,

Wid a heavy heart an a swell up eye, me a try fi write dah letta yah. From mi a likkle picnkey, sah, mi dream fi come a Merica. Every day mi would'a read uno newspapah, an dream bout di day wen mi would'a come a Merica. So mi wuck haad fi get a visa, suh mi can be legal, sah, an fi some reason, mi always a hear bout one colah caard, sah. Oh, by the way, sah, mi real name a nuh Katherine Blackwood Jones – mi real name a Nicky Brown, sah, so sorry fi lie to yuh, sah. And fi tell yuh the truth, mi neva go to Arizona, cause mi hear say dem immigration law too haad, sah. So mi mek sure say mi come a Florida, mi hear say it look like Jamaica. An cause a dat, me leff mi washbelly¹ wid mi sick maddah, juss fi come a Merica. Mi tink say wen mi come a Merica, dem would'a accept mi, sah. Cause wen uno come a Jamaica, wi cook big pot, clean up yard an throw party, sah. But still me leff mi family, mi husband, mi 10 pickney², juss fi come a Merica. Wen mi come up yah, mi wuck haad every day, mi buss sweat, mi cook yuh food wid mi bear han sah. Mi even teach yuh how fi eat peppah. When oddah helpah wash clothes inna machine, mi wash fi yuh clothes wid mi bare han, sah. Yuh look like cotton inna a field a tar, sah, yuh shoes all shinah dan silvah. Mi clean yuh house, wash yuh clothes an tek care a yuh pickney, sah. Even tho mine get leff wid mi sick maddah. Mi would'a neva forget di time wen yuh ketch diarrhoea, mi clean yuh up and wash yuh drawz, sah. Mi know mi tek good care a yuh, an mi do all dat wid a smile pan mi face, sah. Di best ting fi know say, di money would'a tek care a poor poor family a Jamaica. But one day, wen mi a go home, sah, mi see one tall white man inna one police suit, sah. Wen mi look close, nuh one Immigration Offisah, him come to mi an ask mi fi di same colah caad, sah. So dem sen mi home like a mongrel daag, sah, wid mi shame between mi legs, sah. An now yuh know di story, mi get sen home, cause mi neva hav di colah caard, sah. Mi hope yuh nuh vex wid mi still, likkle more, sah, mi guess di only time mi ago see yuh a wen u come a Jamaica.

Wid nuff respect, sah, Nicky.

(Endnotes)

1 last child

2 children



Female Gaze

Etching

Erika Hagarty



Paseo Colonial
Gelatin Silver Print
Federica Molini

Black Clothes, White Shoes

by Sarah Lundy

I wear all black
But leave my feet white.
My flesh is troubled with darkness
But my spirit walks in light.

Like a mission
I try to do what's right,
But there's a battle within me
That I have to fight.

I have unpleasant thoughts
That ruin my sight,
And I wake up crying
In the middle of the night.

And I find myself
In a miserable plight,
But I know that the future
Will bring blessings of excite.

I dream and dream
Of a world that's eternal and bright.
With buildings of gold
And incredible height.

I keep those things to my heart
Close and tight,
And pray that soon
I'll rejoice with such delight.

Never shall again shall I worry
Or shiver in fright
Or throb my head
Or bleed or bite.

But mat happy souls
Reunite
And praise the Most High
With all their might.

May their vast wings
Shine and take flight
And shower the world
With dreams to ignite

Dreams of angels
And heavenly invite,
Not of dark visions
And words of contrite

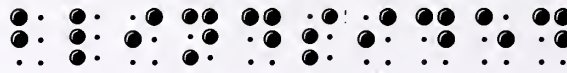
And though the world
May continue to throw its blight,
At least my soul
Can rest for tonight

I wear all black
But leave my feet white.
My flesh is troubled with darkness
But my spirit walks in light.



Sons of Liberty
Photoshop
Vladimir Gluzman

BLINDSIDED



BY KAY G. RAPER

She came into this world alone, a perfect baby girl, with delicate features. Tragically, that all changed with a single mistake. In all the drama of birthing her after twenty-three hours of very hard, unrelenting labor, a simple omission was all it took to darken her world forever, before she'd ever had the chance to see it. The drops were forgotten, a misstep, tragic and unfortunate, and within hours, she had a ravenous infection that seemed to devour her tiny eyes as if they were a rare delicacy. At first, they didn't know what had caused the problem and when they finally figured it all out, it was too late for Susan. She was blind, and it was irreversible. Her parents could hardly believe their ears, after years of infertility treatments, a very difficult pregnancy during which her mother was confined to bed rest, and after a long and arduous labor, she was finally in their arms, perfect in every way and suddenly, plucked from them, like a too ripe berry, and placed in a cold, dark cubicle, alone, where she was poked and prodded for days.

"Your child can develop normally, without sight, with the proper nurture and stimulation. In fact, with the proper training, she will be able to function quite well as her other senses will be enhanced and magnified. Of course, she will need help to maneuver around until she is older, but she should be able to live a full life and besides never being able to see her world, should be able to experience it in all other ways, much better than you or I." The doctor's words were meant to be encouraging but seemed to be overly optimistic. Perhaps it was because of the lawsuit my parents filed soon after "the mistake." The proceeds went into a trust for me. They did not touch one penny of it, and it was at my disposal when I was once again, alone, soon after their untimely deaths. I did develop normally and actually thrived with the love and nurture of my devoted parents who saw to it that I lived a normal life. My hearing was extraordinarily acute, and my other senses were heightened beyond comprehension. It seems that the body compensates for the loss of one sense by making the others super-tuned. I was able to navigate my way with little assistance, and it amazed the myriad of doctors who said that I was a miracle in my own right.

I didn't dwell on my loss but counted it as an asset. All my life, I'd been told I was better off not seeing the hate in this world or the scenes of poverty or the horrors of war. In fact, more times than not, people seemed to focus on my losses. That was until I met Brian. He was my salvation from the start. He was strong yet loving, strong-willed yet yielding, a confident man with a boyish tenderness. He came into my life when I least expected it. He worked at the bank where my parents had placed my trust. He guided me through all the legal loopholes as if we were on a journey together and seemed to take special care of me. Soon, I was under his spell and in his arms. It seemed like a match made in heaven. He didn't even seem to notice my deficiency because I had learned to compensate so well. He moved in, and we became a couple. He quit what he called a "dead-end job" at the bank and spent more time with me. "Susan, I think we should buy a bike to ride when the weather is nice. It would help me as I look for a new job and save gas at the same time. Do you think I could borrow some money for it? It'll be a great investment for the two of us," he said convincingly.

"Sure, Brian, how much do you need?"

And some months later,

"Hey, you know, my car's getting old. I'm really afraid that we'll be stranded in a snowstorm this winter. It's on its last leg now. Do you think you could loan me some cash to buy us a car?"

"Us." He knew that little word would get me every time. I so wanted it to be "us" always, even though I often wondered why he wanted to be with a blind lover. Growing up, strangers often had come up to me and raved about how pretty I was. Also, just as often, as they walked away, I heard them add, "A pity she's blind. All that beauty wasted. She could have anyone she set her sights on if it weren't for her blindness." Except that was the cold, cruel reality. I couldn't set my sights on anything. But then Brian came into my life and my world was brighter than it had ever been.

"Hey, Susan, there's this job I'm looking at, and I'd like to go out there and check it out. It's on the west coast and I think it's the break I've been looking for. It looks like a job to die for. I think it's a real opportunity for us," he rambled on like a little boy trying to convince someone to buy him a toy. "They say the sunsets are beautiful out there," he spoke quickly, without even thinking. "Only problem is I'll need a few grand for the flight, hotel, and a little for some grub," he petitioned her as always. She had become his ATM.

"How much do you need?" she replied, trying to sound cheerful. When she asked about joining him, he said the same thing he always did. It would be boring for her, waiting in a hotel alone, with no one to help her find her way around a strange place. In the beginning, she didn't think twice about his intentions because she felt he loved her as deeply as she did him.

Although she didn't have the gift of sight, she did have many gifts. She was bright, in addition to being beautiful. Her other senses were indeed enhanced in spite of the lack of sight. Her parents had seen to that. She had been a part of every program imaginable to develop her other senses to the fullest. Sensory deprivation was never in her world until now. When they first met, she was the center of his world. He lovingly did everything for her, without ever complaining. It seemed fate had smiled on her when they met that day in the bank. It seemed love at first sight. For her, it was the closest she would ever come to "seeing." All her senses were aroused when he came near her, especially when their love was new. That was until the betrayal began. Late nights on his cell when he thought she was asleep in the other room. She would suddenly appear without sound and startle him. Often she heard the deafening "beep" of the phone when he discovered her beside him. "Who are you talking to this late, honey? Is everything all right?" Always the same answer,

"Just checking to make sure my cell is off."

She was much too smart to believe his lies, but since she couldn't "see" any proof, she listened even more closely to the things he said as well as the things he didn't. Although she'd never seen this man, she knew him like no other. She knew that he was tall and had slightly curly hair, and he was hard as a rock and his face was always scruffy, even after she'd heard the shaver. She knew his smell. She sensed his presence when he came into the room, mostly by his delightful aroma. Whether he wore cologne or not, she could pick him out of a crowded room like a bloodhound looking for a murderer. She knew his hands, soft when he

touched her but firm and solid and strong when he guided her throughout a crowded street, as protective as a lion with his cub. The only problem was lately; they went out less and less. They seemed to touch less and less, and their talking was reduced to the daily request for a withdrawal of cash he constantly seemed to be in need of. He was always looking for a job and so when he mentioned the west coast job with the beautiful sunsets, she wanted to believe him this time. That was until she got up late one night for a glass of water. She reeled as she heard the words, deafening in her ears,

"Baby, I just had to hear your voice, no texting tonight. I needed to wrap my mind around your sexy voice and imagine it's your beautiful legs around my body."

She had to steady herself because she was stunned by what she'd heard. At first, she thought it might have been a bad dream. She gripped the doorframe to steady herself before going back to bed, alone. Her thoughts were swirling like the last bit of water through the drain of a bathtub.

The doctors had told her parents that her other senses would compensate for the loss and become more acute and it was true. She heard every word as if she were right next to him and not down the hallway. She had suspected it. The distinctive "beep" of the cell every time she came into the room. The frequent trips to find "the perfect job." Now, this job, "a job to die for" is how he described it. He made his plans with this secret, unseen lover. He had told Susan he was going on a job hunt but of course not the part about meeting his mistress at the Cranefield the next evening. She had believed him before when he'd told her he couldn't pass up this opportunity for "us." She'd willingly doled out the money for the flight, the hotel, and even a little extra for his scouting the area for a place for them if he liked the job offer. He had lovingly assured her,

"I'll call you every day. This is a sure thing, I think."

She'd already decided, before she heard the details of his scheming with this woman, that this would be the last trip she'd fund. All of the money that had been placed for her in trust was dwindling and she knew for certain now that he had duped her and used her as one uses a washrag, cleaning a filthy body. She suddenly felt defiled and alone. Her next decision was an easy one and that was a little unsettling to her but she went with her "senses."

She helped him get ready for his trip, pretending to be supporting, encouraging, and hopeful. Little did he know she'd planned her own trip... one to die for as well.

She had booked a room adjoining his at the Cranefield, telling the desk clerk that it was their anniversary, a little surprise. Reluctant at first, he agreed when she offered handsome compensation to keep the "surprise" a secret and to help her make this special for them.

The first night, she just listened to their raucous noises all through the night. Hearing her moans and his loud groans was almost more than she could bear. Although the first time she heard them, she felt as if her heart was snatched from her body, on the second night these same sounds seemed to revitalize her as she sat listening, just after Brian's call to her, at home, he thought. Thinking she was back home in Trenton, he once again pledged his love to Susan and said that everything was going to be great for them. She wanted to believe him, but her ears never failed her. This scumbag was pledging the same love to her as he had to his mistress a couple of hours before and then he began a plan that stopped her heart cold. He had plans to bring his new love to Trenton. He'd see her every day, every chance he got. Susan was very trusting, and it'd be easy.

"Susan believes in me, and that's what makes this so great. She thinks that we will be together forever so a marriage is just what she's hoping for. Since her money's almost gone, she'll think that ours is a love that will last and I'm not doing it for the money, only I'll take out a large policy and then an untimely death, a tragedy." How, he'd not figured that out yet, but, give him time. "It will be easy. A blind girl, lots could happen to someone who couldn't see what was coming in a strange place."

She couldn't believe her ears. Though she couldn't see them physically, she could vividly envision the two of them plotting her demise and she was wild with furor. She planned it all that night. She already had noticed that the girl left early every morning and Brian always slept in after their late-nighters. She rehearsed it over and over in her dreams, whether she was awake or not. She had plenty of time to think.

She thought she should have seen it coming. He left her alone for longer and longer periods of time. Silence now was their new bed partner when he wasn't with the other one. She had grown accustomed to not only being unable to see him, but also to feel or hear him as much as before. It was as if he'd locked her up in a sound-proof, padded room, with constant sensory deprivation. A world without sound or touch, as well as one without sight. Still it haunted her, how things she thought to be true probably

never really were at all. First, the need for a constant flow of cash, followed by the less and less frequent times spent together and when they were together, the immutable silence, deafening at times. She had considered his greed for the money she'd bring in her untimely death. No, she would never do it for the money. It wasn't about money at all. It was about betrayal. Being betrayed when she was so vulnerable, was more than she could fathom. It was as if a cloak were wrapped around her darkness, growing heavier and heavier, tighter and tighter, choking her very being.

She'd asked the bellboy to make sure the door adjoining was unlocked. She tipped him generously to make sure he'd comply. She waited until she was sure his mistress had left. She had picked a long, slender blade that fit easily into her coat pocket. Placing it there, she noticed that it felt smooth and cold, but very sharp. She had to be careful not to move too quickly as it could easily injure the wrong person. She was already too injured to care about her own safety. She silently opened the door and moved toward the bed. His unmistakable smell filled her senses and memories suddenly flooded her mind as if a dam had broken and she felt she was drowning. She fought hard not to think. He was a self-serving, evil bastard, who was planning to kill her. She was glad she'd put that little recorder chip on his phone before the conversation. She'd even invested in the one that slipped under the door to their room which had recorded all the details of his scheme to systematically cause her demise. Whether it helped her defense or not, she didn't care. Knowing that the world would soon learn of Brian's plans for her "untimely death" was comforting to her in a strange way. How much worse could a penitentiary cell be compared to this prison he'd placed her in? She measured her steps. The room was set up identically so she knew exactly where the bed was. She sat on the edge and listened to him breathe, smelled his scent, and felt the warmth of his body close to hers. For a moment she hesitated, but then thought about all the life he'd sucked out of her. . . "an eye for an eye," so to speak, "justifiable homicide," "sweet revenge" were the thoughts which swirled around relentlessly in her head. She slid the blade gently from her pocket and placed her hand on his hairy chest. When he stirred, she leaned down and whispered, "Yes, my love, you were right; this is just the job to die for" as she plunged the steel into his chest. She sat there silently, blindly, as he sputtered his final breaths. It suddenly occurred to her, he was just like her—blind-sided, he never saw it coming.



Dog Daze
Monotype
Ismael Lopez



Columbus' Soldier

Gelatin Silver Print

Carolina Pineda

WITCH

by Larissa Cantave

*Bastinda is the name of the wicked witch of the West in Magic Land. With the help of the Winged Monkeys, she has taken over Winkie Country.

In the next room

The clock is ticking

Loud as thunder

Is it time already?

We are not prepared

No one is

But in the next room

The clock is ticking

Louder and louder

She is almost here

At the front door, a knock

Then a shrill, no,

An earsplitting, piercing voice.

The blatant discord of 2 inch heels

And a black, mini rolling luggage

Migrate to the Living room

Three doors down,

The screechy voiced woman settles.

Her petite feet stumble upon the ground

Echoing those of an angry troll

She makes way to the kitchen

Ready to unleash her anger

And conquer Winkie country,

For she might be Bastinda's relative.

Hunched back, misery on our faces,

We walk towards the vile aunt of ours

And softly, we exhale

"The Witch is here."



Untitled
Photography
Ellie Santangelo

DON'T LEAVE

by Jeremy Cotto

Tiffany is lying down on her bed watching her favorite show on TV. She's about to fall into a deep sleep when her door opens and her grandfather walks in.

"Grandpa, what are you doing here?"

"I came to say bye to you."

"Bye? But I didn't know you were here. You never came to say hi."

"I'm sorry. Hi, Tiffany, how are you?"

"I'm ok, how about you?"

"I feel great, never better, just wanted to see you before I left."

"Oh. Where are you going?"

"To see my mother, it's been a long time."

"Can I come with you? I want to see her too."

"I'm sorry you can't, but I'll tell her you said hi, ok?"

"Ok."

"I'm gonna get going now. Take care of yourself."

"Don't leave yet grandpa. Spend some more time with me."

"I'm sorry sweetie but I have to. I don't have much time and I have a lot of people to say bye to before I go."

"Can you tell me a story first so that I can go to bed?"

"I don't know..."

"Don't you walk out that door without telling me a story grandpa, that wouldn't be fair."

"Ok, ok, I'll tell you a story. Get comfortable first."

"Are you ready?"

"Yes sir."

"Ok, so on my way here I saw your sister."

"My sister? But she's not here yet. How did you do that?"

"I just did. Anyway, she looked so beautiful. She had long black hair, chubby cheeks like yours and light brown eyes. She looked a lot like your mommy."

"Really? Wow, so she's beautiful."

"Yes she is."

"She told me that she couldn't wait to see you. She said she hears you talking to her all the time and she gets excited."

"She can hear me?!"

"Yeah she can. She hears everything you say."

"Wow."

"So, anyway, while I was talking to her, God came to me. He told me that she wasn't feeling too well and that he was considering bringing her back with him."

"Oh no."

"Yeah. So he asked me if I'd be willing to join him so that we could make her all better. So that way, you two could play together. I looked at him and I said of course I will God! I'd do it in a heartbeat!"

"Grandpa you spoke to God?"

"Yes I did."

"I don't believe you."

"Why not?"

"Because."

"Because what?"

"Just because. So, what happened next?"

"Well, God told me that when I joined him all my pain would go away. I liked the sound of that but I felt sad. I wanted to see you again, so I asked him if I could say bye to you before I left and he said yes. So that's why I'm here now."

"You told me you were going to see your mommy, but you're going to live with God. You lied."

"No, I didn't. My mommy is with God, I'm going to go and visit her when I leave with Him."

"Oh. Do you have to leave?"

"Yes I do. But don't worry I'll always be with you."

"But I don't want you to go."

"I know, but I want to make sure you get to see your sister, so I have to leave."

"Will God ever take me to see you?"

"One day, but that's a long time from now. Don't worry about that right now... It's time for me to go."

"No."

"Yes, I have to."

"Can you give me a kiss goodnight?"

"No I can't. But I'll tell you a secret."

"Really? What is it?"

"You know Charlie, the little bear I got you?"

"Yeah, I don't like him."

"I know. You throw him off the bed all the time. Well the secret is that I will be with you every time you have Charlie next to you. It'll be our little secret. Anytime you need me, just hold him and I'll

come to you. Ok?"

"You promise?"

"I promise."

"Then I promise I'll hold him close to me forever."

"That's great. Here let me put him next to you so that I'll be with you tonight."

"Grandpa, why can't you hold me?"

"Because it would make me want to stay with you."

"And you don't want to?"

"I do. But I want you to be able to hold your sister more."

"Ok, I understand. So is this goodbye then?"

"For now. But you'll see me again."

"Don't forget to close the door ok?"

"I won't."

"I love you grandpa."

"I love you too Tiffany."

"...Grandpa....no..."

As the door closed shut Tiffany awoke from her dream screaming "Don't go." Her great grandmother rushed into the room to see if she was okay. The phone rang. Her great grandmother went to answer it. Tiffany looked around her room and saw Charlie the teddy bear on her bed. Her grandmother rushed back in crying, she told Tiffany that her mother had just called and told her that her grandfather just died. Tiffany eyes began to water. As she felt the pain rising she remembered what he had said in the dream. She grabbed Charlie and held him close and almost immediately she felt her grandfather warmth surround her, and soothe her. She would never let him go.



Lori Negron

Furry Fella
Digital Art
Lori R. Negron



Street
Photography (Diptych)
Jamie Restrepo



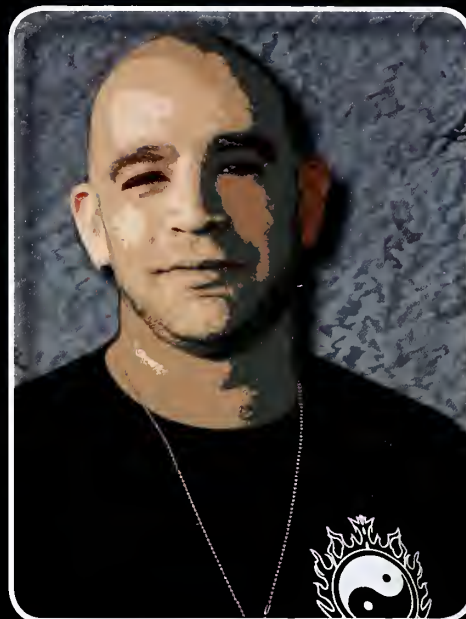
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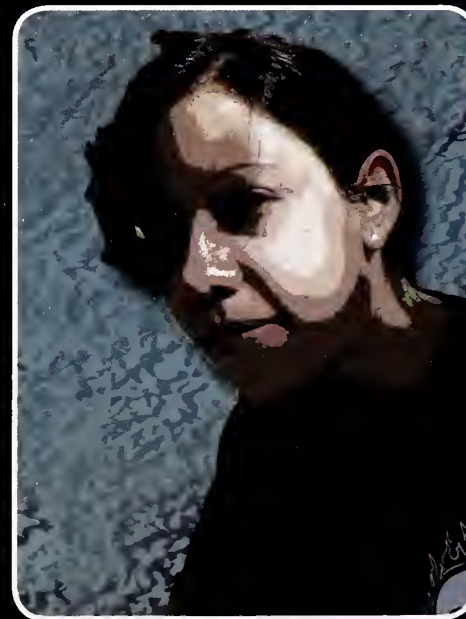
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